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CHAPTERS ON HOME-MISSION WORK

By
REV. AMBROSE REGER, O.S.B.

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This Book

IS RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED

AS A TOKEN OF FILIAL LOVE

TO THE

RIGHT REVEREND BERNARD MENGES, O.S.B.

IN MEMORY OF HIS

TWENTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY AS ABBOT

OF

ST. BERNARD'S MONASTERY

ST. BERNARD, ALA.

FOREWORD

A NUMBER OF the chapters of this book have appeared in various clerical reviews, namely one in the Homiletic and Pastoral Review, two in the Ecclesiastical Review and about half of the book in the Acolyte. They were offered the Reverend Editors with the understanding that they would be embodied in a volume to be published later. The author wishes to thank them for agreeing to this arrangement.

In presenting these pages to his brother priests the writer wishes to say that they are the fruit of notes and observations made during his missionary labors in an overwhelmingly Protestant district, extending over a period of twenty years. He does not claim that he himself has always practised the numerous counsels laid down in this book, but as he looks back he can easily see how he could have advanced his work had he more closely applied the principles recommended.

If the reader should find the style somewhat harsh and dictatorial let him remember that the admonitions are mostly directed at the author himself and must be looked upon as a self-accusation rather than a reflection on brother priests. It is however, his sincere hope that by infusing into others

Foreword

some of the apostolic zeal that animated the pioneer missionaries of this country, he can make amends for the shortcomings of his own ministry. Let the old Benedictine motto become everybody's guide:

"Ut In Omnibus Glorificetur Deus."

Ripley, Ohio. Feast of St. Gertrude, 1928.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
FOREWORD.....	V
CHAPTER	
I. THE PRIEST'S DUTY TOWARD THE OTHER SHEEP	I
II. PRAYER	5
III. EXAMPLE	9
IV. PERSONAL INTERCOURSE	14
V. PREACHING	22
VI. DIVINE SERVICE	32
VII. SPECIAL OCCASIONS	41
VIII. MISSIONS FOR NON-CATHOLICS	50
IX. SUNDAY EVENING SERMONS	64
X. PRINTER'S INK	71
XI. DISTRIBUTION OF CATHOLIC LITERATURE.	80
XII. LETTER WRITING	89
XIII. MISSION SCHOOLS	100
XIV. PROTESTANTISM	113
XV. BIGOTRY AND IGNORANCE	122
XVI. BIGOTRY AND MALICE	136
XVII. MIXED MARRIAGE	154
XVIII. STRAY SHEEP	165
XIX. LAY APOSTOLATE	176
XX. HARVEST OF SOULS	185
XXI. PERSEVERANCE AND REWARD	202



Alias Oves Habeo

-- I --

THE PRIEST'S DUTY TOWARD THE OTHER SHEEP

"Attendite vobis et universo gregi, in quo vos Spiritus Sanctus posuit . . ." (Act. Apost., xx, 28.)

THE JEWS made a fatal mistake when they presumed that the Messiah was to come solely for the benefit of the Chosen People, and that no Gentile would have part in Him. Christ soon corrected this error. He declared: "Other sheep I have, that are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice, and there shall be one fold and one shepherd." It is true, Christ came first for His own people; they had lived in expectation of the Messiah for several thousand years, and therefore, could be supposed to be well prepared to accept the Gospel, and being once converted, would form the cornerstone of His Church. This logical expectation was fulfilled in so far as the Twelve Apostles were taken from the ranks of the Chosen People. They were commissioned to go forth and teach all nations.¹ Not only were they to preach the Gospel, but they were to preserve the purity of the Faith. Heresies and schisms are of very ancient origin. "For there shall be a time when they will not

¹ Math., xxviii, 19.

endure sound doctrine; but according to their own desires, they will heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears: and will indeed turn away their hearing from the truth, but will be turned unto fables.”¹ That such misguided persons be not left a prey to their delusions, is plain: “*Haec est autem voluntas ejus, qui misit me Patris; ut omne, quod dedit mihi, non perdam ex eo, sed resuscitem illud in novissimo die.*”² Therefore, after making them Christians, St. Paul prays for the Romans: “God grant you to be of one mind one towards another, . . . that with one mind, and with one mouth, you may glorify God. . . .”³ To Timothy, he wrote: “(God) will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth.”⁴

Behold, how clear is the will of God that all men be taught the truth and thus be saved! Hence, as priests and apostles, we are told not only “*attendite vobis,*” but also “*et universo gregi, in quo vos Spiritus Sanctus posuit.*” If we thus understand the will of God in regard to our apostleship, why still ask: What have I to do with those outside the fold? “*Si ergo eandem gratiam dedit illis Deus, sicut et nobis, qui credidimus in Dominum Jesum Christum; ego quid eram, qui possem prohibere Deum?*”⁵

What Christ Himself publicly pronounced His sacred object, what the Apostles considered their duty, the priest of to-day must not ignore. The unity of the

¹ II Tim., iv, 3, 4.

² Joannes, vi, 39.

³ Rom., xv, 5, 6.

⁴ I Tim., ii, 4.

⁵ Acta Apost., xi, 17.

Church, the purity of her divine doctrine, and the care of all souls must constantly engage his mind. It is not so much a question of tedious, oftentimes, unpleasant duties, but rather a question of the honor of God and His Church. For every stray sheep that is recovered, every renegade Catholic reclaimed, every stranger brought into communion with God new honor and glory accrue to the Church. As St. Cyprian most beautifully expresses this truth: "When Satan saw that his altars were destroyed, he discovered new methods of obstructing the Church: heresy and schism. He intended to corrupt faith and to tear asunder the bond of unity; but through these new attacks, he furnished the Church new occasions for fresh victories."

It is not so much the lack of priests that keeps the kingdom of God at a distance from the mass of our nation, as rather a lack of laborers: "The Harvest indeed is great, but the laborers are few."¹ Our own situation is well described by the prophet: "My sheep have wandered in every mountain and in every high hill; and my flocks were scattered upon the face of the earth, and there was none that sought them . . .: for my shepherds did not seek after my flock, but the shepherds fed themselves, and fed not my flocks."²

Indeed, the priest who thinks he is doing his duty in taking care of a handful of faithful Catholics, leaving all others to their fate without making the least attempt to reach them, or making any effort to exercise a religious influence over them, or to show them the truth, burdens

¹ Math., xi, 37.

² Ezechiel, xxxiv, 6, 8.

himself with a grave responsibility. Cardinal Vaughan, when asked about the number of his flock, said the whole population of his bishopric was his flock, and that he felt he would be called upon to give an account of their souls. That this distinguished English Cardinal looked upon the matter in the right light is evident from many utterances of the Holy See, especially those of the great Pope, Leo XIII, who in his Encyclical of January 6, 1895, writes thus to the American Bishops:

“ . . . our thoughts now turn to those who dissent from us in matters of Christian Faith; and who will deny that, with not a few of them, dissent is a matter of inheritance rather than of will? How solicitous we are of their salvation, with what ardor of soul we wish that they should be at length restored to the embrace of the Church, the common mother of all, Our apostolic epistle ‘*Praeclara*’ has in very recent times declared. Nor are we destitute of all hope; for He is present and has a care, Whom all things obey and Who laid down His life that He might gather in one of the children of God who were dispersed (St. John, xi, 52). Surely we ought not to desert them, or leave them to their fancies; but with mildness and charity draw them to us, using every means of persuasion to induce them to examine closely every part of Catholic doctrine and to free themselves from preconceived notions.”¹

¹ *Longinque Oceani*, January 6, 1895.

— II —

PRAYER

“Munda cor meum, ac labia mea, omnipotens Deus, qui labia Isaiae prophetae calculo mundasti ignito, ita me tua grata miseratione dignare mundare, ut sanctum Evangelium tuum digne valeam nuntiare.”

— Missale Romanum.

WHAT dew is to grass, prayer is to a successful ministry. Without prayer we cannot achieve anything good. St. Francis Xavier, and his namesake, Francis de Sales, converted vast numbers of pagans and heretics not so much through extraordinary powers of eloquence, as through the channel of pious prayer. They were apt and successful pupils of the great Bishop of Hippo, who admonishes the preacher: “Ut orando pro te et illis quos es allocuturus, sis orator antequam dictor.¹ They had prayed the one hundredth twenty-sixth Psalm too often not to realise that “Nisi Dominus aedificaverit domum, in vanum laboraverunt qui aedificant eam.”

By His own example Christ showed us the necessity of prayer. Before He entered upon His public life, He spent forty days and nights in fasting and prayer, as a preparation for the task of preaching. After hours of instruction, of healing, and comforting those who thronged about Him, He often spent the night in prayer. How touching is His prayer at the Last Supper, on the eve of the crucifixion: “Holy Father, keep them in Thy name whom

¹ August., de doctrina Christ.

Thou hast given me: that they may be one, as we also are one.”¹ He prayed in Gethsemane for strength; on the Cross, for His enemies; He gave thanks for the good He was allowed to perform; He prayed for Peter “that his faith fail not”; in fact, His whole work of the Redemption was built on prayer. Not that He needed to pray! He was God and equal with the Father; but He prayed to impress upon the Apostles that without prayer they would never conquer the earth to the Cross. The Apostles learned this lesson well. “When they prayed, the place was moved wherein they were assembled; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spoke the word of God with confidence.”² Peter and John went up at the ninth hour to pray in the temple. This is related as a commonplace. St. Paul not only begun, but closed his preaching with prayer: “When he had said these things, kneeling down, he prayed with them all.”³

If we wish to be efficient missionaries, we must be men of prayer. This principle is but too often forgotten. The endeavors of many a priest are barren of results because he is building on the unreliable basis of personal ability rather than on the firm foundation of sincere prayer. No doubt, we may convince a man by the strength of our arguments; we may win his good will through our eloquence, or by the gift of personality; but this will not necessarily convert him. Satan himself is convinced of the truth of our religion, but he is far from being con-

¹ John, xvii, 11.

² Acts of the Apost., iv, 31.

³ Ib., xx, 36.

verted. Conversion of the heart is quite a different thing from conviction of the mind. It is a divine grace, and consequently, can be secured only through prayer. "Pray for one another that you may be saved. For the continual prayer of the just man availeth much." ¹

Especially, should the lone mission priest be a man of prayer. Before you go to the parlor to meet a caller, pray; you may save a soul. When you go to the confessional, when you ascend the pulpit, when you are on your way to see a sick person, pray fervently for divine grace that you may find the right word to say, give the right decision, do the right thing. And above all, pray that your behavior may be a constant source of edification to those outside the fold. You may never hear of it, but be assured, your quiet prayers, your truly priestly demeanor, will bring about more conversions than all your sermons and conferences. If St. Francis Xavier "by prayer subdued entire kingdoms to Jesus Christ, if he converted thousands of unbelievers, opened Japan to the Gospel, and made fertile with zealous Christians the vast plains of Asia," how much good could be done by a thousand zealous and prayerful priests laboring amidst a population of millions, so badly scattered as to the individual aspect of Truth.

Let us most heartily join in the prayer of Pope Leo XIII, in his Encyclical "Praeclara," of June 20, 1894:

"And we pray God daily that in His goodness He may deign to increase the number of His ministers who are really worthy of this apostolate and who are ready to

¹ James, v, 16.

sacrifice their convenience, their health, and their very life, if need be, in order to extend the frontiers of the kingdom of Christ. . . .

“Do thou, above all, O Saviour and Father of mankind, Christ Jesus, hasten, and do not delay to bring about that which Thou didst once promise to do, that ‘when lifted up from the earth, Thou wouldst draw all things to Thyself.’”

-- III --

EXAMPLE

"In all things show thyself an example of good works . . . unblameable; . . . that he, who is on the contrary part, may be afraid, having no evil to say of us." (Titus, ii, 7, 8.)

A MISSION priest gave a series of Lenten sermons in one of his outlying chapels. The audience included a number of Protestants who followed the sermons on the Sacred Passion with evident interest. After the series was finished, the preacher while waiting for his train in the local station, happened to overhear the conversation of two young men who were discussing his sermon. "That man can talk all right," said one. — "Yes," the other drawled, "but he himself does not do what he preaches." — "You think not?" — "Sure; no preacher practices what he tells the people to do."

Is this really true? If it be, it may easily be seen why so much of our preaching is without fruit. "*Exempla trahunt*," is an old pagan proverb that is just as true to-day as it ever was. Our listeners are looking for the works of good example after hearing a good sermon. On this account, Christ so earnestly admonished His disciples to be doers, rather than monitors. "You are the salt of the earth," He tells them in His introduction to the Sermon on the Mount, "but if the salt lose its savor, wherewith shall it be salted? . . . You are the light of the world. A city seated on a mountain cannot be hid.

Neither do men light a candle and put it under a bushel, but upon a candlestick, that it may shine to all that are in the house. So let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.”¹

It does not concern us whether or not the ministers of other churches of our town practice in their daily life what they preach; but we know that the Catholic priest is under closer observation than they; that he, more than others, is expected to live up to the ideal of his spiritual message, and to honor his calling by his works. In the fulfillment of this pastoral duty, he has the example of his Divine Master before him who “was a man mighty in word and work before God and all the people.”² It is His wish that we follow His example: “Discite a me, quia mitis sum, et humilis corde,”³ and “I have given you an example, that as I have done to you, so you do also.”⁴

Cardinal Perrone used to say: “I can confute the Calvinists, but to persuade and convert them, you must bring them to the Coadjutor of Geneva.” The Coadjutor of Geneva was St. Francis de Sales who brought about the conversion of heretics not so much by confuting their doctrines, as by the shining example of true godliness and piety. More than by his words, these virtues augmented by an ideal kindness and charity won him the love and confidence of Catholics and Calvinists alike.

We are acquainted with the charming incident related

¹ Math., v, 13.

² Luke, xxiv, 19.

³ Math., xi, 29.

⁴ John, xiii, 15.

in the life of the Seraphic Father: “‘Brother Leo, let us go forth preaching,’ he said one day to one of his followers. And after they had silently walked through the streets of the city, and over populous highways, and were wending their way home to the monastery, the brother asked him why he had not preached as he had said he would do. ‘Why, we have both preached,’ the saint answered him, ‘We have preached poverty by our poor clothes; we have preached penance by our apparent poverty; we have preached the abandonment of the world by our silence; and we have preached the imitation of Our Lord by being despised by worldly people who looked down on us with contempt.’”

Yes, indeed, our life is a sermon, good or bad, according to our words and acts. If we live in a small community, we must guard our steps and watch our words all the more carefully. We are living under the very eyes of a rigorous vigilance committee, consisting of every man, woman, and child of the town. We know how closely the actions of our Lord were watched, especially by those who were not His friends. We would be amazed should we know how severely we are criticised for doing things which in themselves are not morally wrong; as for example: smoking in public, attending a baseball game on Sunday afternoon; going to the races; telling an amusing story at the street corner. It is well enough to maintain that there is no sin in enjoying a good cigar, nor in admiring a running horse, and I, for one, refuse to cater to the arbitrary ruling of non-Catholic fellow-citizens to the extent of depriving myself of all legitimate pastime. But St.

Paul speaks differently. He says we must abstain from otherwise licit things, if by indulging in them, we scandalize our brother. "All things, indeed, are clean; but it is evil for that man who eateth with offense. It is good not to eat flesh, and not to drink wine, nor anything whereby thy brother is offended or scandalized, or made weak." ¹

How many disapproving eyes follow the express wagon that delivers a case of near-beer at the rectory! How severely is the priest censured who spends two or three evenings of the week at the home of a friend in a harmless game of pinochle! If he is a man of keen observation, he will surprise many a wondering glance in his direction on the baseball field, and more so, on the grandstand at the race track, or when he enters a moving picture house. If he stay at home, he will be regarded as a poor mixer; if he is seen on the street every day, they will surmise that he has nothing to do; if he avoids social gatherings in toto, they will think him too austere; if he is seen enjoying himself with happy people, they will think him a worldling; if he is silent, they will consider him dull; if he speaks much, they will apply to him the words of Ecclesiasticus, "A babbler and a fool will regard no time." ² A poor man, this priest, in a small locality where everybody knows him and watches him so closely! What is he to do? Let him study his place; let him study the customs and the mentality and principles of those around him. He must be humble enough to respect their convictions and to distrust his own judgment, for "hast thou

¹ Cf. Rom., xiv, 20, 21.

² Eccclus., xx, 7.

seen a man wise in his own conceit? There shall be more hope of a fool than of him.”¹

As a safe rule of life, let us observe: it is better to be looked upon as a crank than to be considered a worldling; a recluse has more chance to become a saint than has a good mixer. But above all things, let the priest not disregard public opinion. “*Oportet autem illum et testimonium habere bonum ab iis, qui foris sunt, ut non in opprobrium incidat.*”²

¹ Prov., xxvi, 12.

² I Tim., iii, 7.

-- IV --

PERSONAL INTERCOURSE

"Pasce verbo, pasce conversationis exemplo." (St. Bernard.)

MEN and women, striving after higher perfection, have at all times retired from the world and concealed themselves in monasteries, or in obscure and remote places, there to serve God, atone for their sins, and assure their salvation. What Christ did for short periods, they did for a lifetime. We follow with unqualified admiration their heroic career of self-denial for the sake of the kingdom of God. Yet Christ did not wish His Apostles to follow such a course. He did not tell them to withdraw into the Thebais, but He commissioned them to "go forth and preach the Gospel to the whole world." For their practical instruction He took them with Him, not only when He preached on the Mount, or in the temple, or from the barge on Lake Genesareth, but also when He went into the houses of men who were friendly or hostile, as He did at times when invited to dine. From such occasions, the Apostles could learn how to come into contact with all kinds of people, and how to foster the cause of Christianity by word and example.

It would seem that the Gospel recounts with a purpose so many details of the social events in the life of Christ, lest we fall into the error of condemning everything that refers to eating and drinking and social intercourse, as if

such things were unbecoming in a religious leader, if not indeed really sinful. Jesus attended the wedding at Cana; He invited Himself to the house of Zacheus; He spent a sociable and restful day at the house of Lazarus, and sometimes He accepted invitations to the houses of Pharisees, although He knew that such invitations were not proffered in a spirit of sincere hospitality.

St. Paul also made himself at home with his converts, "for the laborer is worthy of his hire." But when he thought the task of entertaining him might prove a hardship to them because of their poverty, St. Paul was careful to explain to them that he would bring his own sustenance with him: "Behold now the third time I am ready to come to you; and I will not be burthensome to you. For I seek not the things that are yours, but you."¹

It would be very wrong in a mission priest to cut himself off from the society of his fellowmen. If led by rules of wisdom and priestly modesty, personal contact not only with your own congregation, but with the most of Protestants is prolific of good. "*In sapientia ambulate ad eos qui foris sunt, tempus redimentes.*"² We are called "Father" not only by our own people, but also by most of the non-Catholic people, and we must live up to this title of honor. Living amid a population of a great variety of creeds and principles, one jealous of the other, but all alike suspicious of the Catholic Church, much depends on how we deal with them and upon the impression and the influence we exert over them. It is not beneath the dignity of the priest to become as one of the

¹ II Cor., xii, 14.

² Col., iv, 5.

community, to meet the people in the daily walks of social and industrial life, to take a real interest in their ideas and local ambitions, to mourn with them in their sorrows, and thus find the way to their hearts. Again, it is the Great Apostle of the Gentiles who teaches us. "For whereas I was free to all, I made myself the servant of all, that I might gain the more. And I became to the Jews, a Jew, that I might gain the Jews: . . . To the weak I became weak, that I might gain the weak. I became all things to all men, that I might save all . . . And I do all things for the gospel's sake." ¹

The more a priest identifies himself with the glorious example of St. Paul, the more will he attract people in a personal way, and more will come to hear him preach the Gospel of Christ. This is a more shallow age than was that of St. Paul. More than ever before it is now a question of personal liking as to whether or not out-siders will come to hear us preach. A man with a pleasing personality, good manners, and kindly address will never lack an interested and eager audience. "But the servant of the Lord must not wrangle: but be mild towards all men, apt to teach, patient. With modesty admonishing them that resist the truth."²

In small towns, the inhabitants are usually particular in regard to the social amenities; the priest, recognized as an educated man, must demonstrate his superior training by a superior culture. He will, obedient to St. Paul, always "shun profane and vain speeches," and will "let no evil speech proceed from his mouth; but that

¹ I Cor., ix, 19-23.

² II Tim., ii, 24, 25.

which is good, to the edification of faith, that it may administer grace to the hearers.”¹ If the priest acts on these principles, if he shows kindness and consideration to all, irrespective of faith, if he acts both as a Christian and as a gentleman when distress visits his neighbors’ homes, he will be sure of a hearty welcome wherever he knocks at a door. His visits will be so much the more appreciated, if he does not provoke religious arguments on every slight pretext, but is ever prepared to give a lucid explanation of our tenets, if asked for information.

A prudent priest made it his rule to inquire for any sick member in a Protestant household of his neighbors, making the inquiry of some member of the family itself. His solicitude was invariably rewarded with an invitation to call. The mood of the sick person would show the priest whether or not to broach the subject of religion; but he could always, at least, say a few words about our Saviour’s sufferings and the merit of patience. In every case, this priest was asked to call again. At times we are asked to pray over the sick; sometimes we may feel embarrassed, since we have not the custom to compose prayers for any occasion on the spur of the moment, as do the Protestant ministers. Still, we need not hesitate. What better prayer could be said than the Lord’s Prayer, followed by the acts of faith, hope, charity, and contrition? End by saying slowly the words of the doxology: “Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost.” These words pronounced slowly over a sick man will linger long in his mind, and may become the presage of his salvation.

¹ Eph., iv, 29.

Again: the priest should not refuse any and all invitations to dine with those outside his own flock. As a rule, his hosts will consider it an honor and a privilege to entertain him and in the hours thus spent, the priest may have a splendid opportunity to establish himself in their graces and good will. Let him realize, however, that the chance for either success or failure is about even, hence, he will do well to remember the words of Ecclesiasticus "art thou set at a great table? Be not the first to open thy mouth upon it" ¹; for "if any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man." ² If he is a good conversationalist, one who not only can talk well, but is also at the same time a good listener, he will be able both to teach and to learn. He will learn to understand the other side, the other ideas, the opinions and reasons for holding them; and he will be happy to have an opportunity to show the good on our side in the best light.

Such social occasions, however, are not infrequently pitfalls for the unwary young priest. He may be able at any time to mount the pulpit and acquit himself in a creditable manner; but when he meets his audience in the parlor, or at the dinner table, he is liable to make blunders which later he would make any sacrifice to undo. The reason is that when he preaches from the pulpit he chooses his own subject; the audience is then a silent listener, and he feels the security of being in his own place; his authority as a priest protects him from the scoff or sneer of his opponent. But at a social function others are apt to introduce the subject; he may be on

¹ Ecclus. xxxi. 12

² Jas., iii, 2.

unfamiliar ground, and is taken unawares. Of all times this is the hour "to take heed lest thou slip with thy tongue and fall in the sight of thy enemies who lie in wait for thee."¹

Therefore, I say such parties are dangerous at the best. We know from the Gospel that Jesus was never more closely watched, never more sorely tried, nor more basely calumniated than when He partook of the doubtful hospitality of the higher classes of Jewish society. If we follow His example in accepting such invitations, we must likewise emulate His sublime motives; namely, to do good, to give blessings, to instruct and edify. At a wedding feast Jesus raised matrimony to the dignity of a sacrament; at a great banquet, He placed the penitent sinner beyond the idle just; at a social gathering in the house of Lazarus He taught His Apostles that there were more important things than the "*frequens ministerium*" of Martha, that the contemplative Mary had chosen the better part. As a self-invited guest to the house of Zacheus, He brought about the conversion of His host; on another occasion He taught His disciples a lesson in good manners. Last, but not least, at the Last Supper, He linked the natural food to the supernatural, giving them the flesh and blood of the Lamb of God.

The most serious mistake, made sometimes by the inexperienced priest, is that when he considers himself the guest of honor and assumes that it devolves on him to entertain the assembled guests. In his eagerness to put everybody at ease, he tells a pleasant story; noting that

¹ Ecclus., xxviii, 30.

it has taken well, he throws caution to the winds, and goes on until he has irremediably spoiled his position. He comes home, a sadder but a wiser man, and most sincerely subscribes to what has been said above: it is easier to preach a good sermon than to entertain a dinner party with spiritual success. With shame and mortification he tells himself, as he retires that night: "Si tacuisses, philosophus mansisses."

Do you know the sociable priest? Maybe your own predecessor was of the class. Ever and anon you will hear one of his bon mots, and it makes you blush to think that a man in the livery of a servant of God should have donned the trappings of the buffoon. Did Christ tell His hearers such stories to attract their attention? Did He tell them jokes to win them to follow Him into the desert? Did the Apostles perform vaudeville stunts to find the way to the heart of Jew or Gentile?

On his departure from a parish, the most unenviable reputation a priest can leave is this: popular with outsiders, praised by the wicked, generally liked as a good mixer, but not admired as a priest.

It is well that we should be liked by outsiders; it is necessary to have their respect if we wish to make converts to our Faith; but we must never curry favor at the expense of our priestly dignity which, like a divine fragrance emanating from the imposition of the hands of the bishop, ought to envelope the man of God.

In fact, we can be popular without being commonplace. we have an example of this in the Life of Priest Gordon: "The great mass of the people of the city were outside

the pale of the Church, and did not sit at his feet as he expounded its doctrines; but they were so much impressed with the man in the priest that even in those days of sectarian bitterness, and while he did not hide his beliefs, nor compromise his ecclesiastical position, he was held in the highest honor" (Dr. J. Stark).

-- V --

PREACHING

"For if I preach the gospel, it is no glory to me, for a necessity lieth upon me: for woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel." (I Cor., ix, 16.)

THIS is not intended as a chapter in homiletics. The reader has studied that branch in the seminary, and probably has by now purchased and read almost every book on the market dealing with sacred eloquence. He knows what a good sermon ought to be; he has learned how to construct one, how to memorize and deliver it. But if he is situated, as I think he is, he has discovered that his course in rhetoric and sacred eloquence leaves something to be desired. While it is true enough that "*Omnis scriptura divinitus inspirata utilis est ad docendum, ad arguendum, ad corripiendum, ad erudiendum in justitia,*"¹ still such sermons as we have been trained to produce would be suitable only for large churches and large congregations, comprising all classes of persons. But when we find ourselves standing at the altar of a mission chapel with a handful of people before us, all of whom we recognize at a glance, the elegant sermon we wrote in the seminary appears suddenly to be out of place.

The preacher can see every face expectantly turned toward him, each one anxious to read the words of life and truth from his lips. From those faces, he correctly gauges

¹ II Tim., iii, 16.

their intelligence, and knows precisely when he is speaking over their heads. Now is the time to follow the example of Père Antoine, the famous Capuchin missionary. He tells us that for himself the best preparation for a sermon was "to meditate on my subject, putting myself always in the presence of my hearers." Cardinal Manning says: "What need of memory when a man speaks out of the fulness of his present consciousness? It is a proverb that every man is eloquent on his own subject." A writer in the *Ecclesiastical Review* thus expresses himself: "A sermon which is insincere expresses nothing, however big the words; it is the only bad sort, and is the worst of all for the preacher. And every sermon that is not within the boundary of the hearers is of that class. An eye looking into your eye, an ear heeding your every word, a mind affected now or never: these key a man up, make his thoughts brisk and energetic and promote greater efforts to be clear and direct."¹

As you face your auditors with one of those ill-timed sermons, you are soon aware that you are losing your direction; your mind searches for something to say that will not only please, but interest and benefit your hearers. The authors whose sermons you have studied as models did not know your hearers, did not know their needs, nor their mental limitations. Consequently, you find yourself forced to change those sermons, to adapt them to the requirements of your present congregation. This should not prove so difficult. You know your theology, you are full of zeal to do good, to instruct, to enlighten, to exhort,

¹ *Eccl. Review*, Vol. xlvii, No. 1.

to warn and reprove. You can say many things, and say them well, in your study, on the street: why not in the pulpit? Cardinal Manning expresses the same sentiment when he says: "Statesmen, lawyers, men of science, poets, soldiers, traders, each in his own craft is ready and fluent at any time, howsoever sudden. They speak with facility and fulness. The habitual thoughts of each are upon his calling, work, or craft, and without preparation he is ready at any moment to speak correctly and promptly. Why is it, then, that a priest cannot without preparation speak for God and for His kingdom, for His truth and for His law?" ¹

By studying your congregation you will soon become acquainted with their religious needs and you will learn, like St. Paul, the great lesson of becoming all things to all men. Thence you will learn to speak to them from the fulness of the heart and your sermon will have the ring of sincerity. "In vain is the sermon," says St. Gregory,² "which illuminates only, without setting the hearers aflame." "For it is not you that speak, but the spirit of your Father that speaketh in you." ³

John of Avila expressed a striking truth when he wrote: "I know no other rules of Sacred Eloquence than love of God and zeal for His honor." A great theologian is not necessarily a good preacher, nor is a fine orator always a good missionary. "Bring me a heretic," said Cardinal Perrone, "and I am sure I can *convince* him; but if you wish to *convert* him, you must take him to Francis de

¹ The Eternal Priesthood.

² Homil, 30.

³ Math., x, 20.

Sales." This may perhaps sound uncharitable, but nevertheless it is the truth: the reason why there is so much futile preaching, preaching that does not affect the hearts of the hearers, is our pride. A great doctor of the Church warns us against the curse of oratorical vanity. A distinguished author of modern times echoes the same warning, when he says: "We are never so vain as in the pulpit. Hence the barrenness of our ministry. The mighty waters are poured upon the land, to wither, not to fertilize." ¹ The desire to shine by our rhetoric, to have people speak of our fluency and of the judicious selection of phrases, bring not the blessing of God; and if it bring any fruit at all, it is such as is scarcely worth the efforts made. St. Paul would not stop to word-painting, to the coining of exquisite phrases, when he addressed the most cultured audience of his times, the Areopagus of Athens. He spoke simply of the Unknown God, seeking only to bring light and truth to them. If this sermon failed to move them, it was because they were not accustomed to listen to plain truths: they were filled with the platitudes of paganism. In all probability, St. Paul could have spoken as brilliantly as even they could have desired, but *cui bono*? The Apostle of the Gentiles wished to convert the heart, not to dazzle the mind with worldly verbiage.

The life of St. Vincent Ferrer affords a beautiful illustration of the rule to preach for God's sake instead of for human glory: "The saint receives a message that the Duke of Bretagne wishes to hear him preach. Not to bring discredit upon his ministry, he is at pains to prepare

¹ Canon Sheehan in "My New Curate."

himself well. He speaks, but all hearts are cold and unmoved. The next day he goes into the pulpit and the groans and sighs of his hearers witness the efficacy of his words. 'Ah! Father,' said one of his listeners, 'what a difference between your sermon to-day and that of yesterday!' — 'My son,' said the saint, 'yesterday Vincent preached, but to-day, the Holy Ghost.'"

Whenever we face an audience to preach the Gospel, whether that audience be large or small, distinguished or lowly, let us always bear the words of Jesus in our minds: "*Qui semetipso loquitur, gloriam propriam quaerit; qui autem quaerit gloriam eius, qui misit eum, hic verax est, et injustitia in illo non est.*"¹

There is another motive than pride that causes the barrenness of our ministry, and even a worse one than pride: the vice of indolence, of ignorance and self-complacency. This makes us self-sufficient, and our preaching becomes a matter of mere natural expression without any effort to direct our words according to the spirit of God. Let us again listen to the zealous prelate whose heart was so full of desire for the conversion of his country. "Most men preach themselves, that is, their natural mind; and the measure and kind of their gifts or acquisitions come out and color and limit their preaching: the eloquent preach eloquently; the learned, learnedly; the pedantic, pedantically; the vainglorious, vaingloriously; the cold, coldly; the indolent, indolently. And how much of the word of God is to be heard in such preaching? Can it be said that such men 'preach not themselves, but Christ Jesus, our Lord'?"²

¹ John, 7, 18

² Cardinal Manning

If one takes the liberty to censure such preachers, he is apt to be told "I try to be original." I am afraid that in matters of life and death eternal there is not much room for originality. Moreover: our great American philosopher, Orestes Brownson says: "Originality does not consist in saying things absolutely new, or which no one has ever said before; but in expressing in our own way, from our own mind, what we ourselves have really thought, felt, or lived." There is the originality of St. John, there is that of St. Paul; yet both agree on every point of faith and are carried away, each in his own way, by the desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ.

Do you think I want to inveigle you into the habit of carelessness in the preparation for preaching? God forbid! On the contrary, I wish to impress upon you that we must always be prepared, always ready to speak in God's honor and for our neighbors' spiritual welfare. At one time you begin a sermon of general intent when suddenly you perceive in the body of auditors one who needs a special lesson. You deviate from your original plan, and leaving the ninety-nine you go after the lost sheep and bring it back tenderly to the fold. Another time you are about to preach on the evil effects of mixed marriage when you see a Catholic man showing his Protestant wife into a pew. You instantly recognize the fact that the words you have prepared will offend this woman, that the harm you will do, will out-weigh the good you might. You will soften some of your harsher expressions, and will altogether eliminate others, adding to and deducting from your argument on the spur of the

moment. These alterations, perhaps, will destroy the most eloquent part of your sermon. But what if by your tact and kindness you bring in a stray sheep instead of driving her away in anger and disgust?

Again: you plan to give your Catholic people a plain instruction on Indulgences, or on the use of the Sacramentals. As you turn to begin your address, you note Protestant hearers in the rear of the church. It strikes you at once that your instruction as prepared would not be understood by these new auditors, that probably they would leave the church with additional impressions on Catholic superstition. So you abandon your subject entirely, and preach a sermon on the Blessed Sacrament, explaining the Mass, or Benediction; or you preach on Confession, on the necessity of religion; or on good works, or some other subject that will interest them and show the beauty and strength of our holy religion at its best. Will you object now, and say: "This is foolhardy. I cannot change my sermon at the last moment. I cannot sacrifice my reputation as a pulpit orator, and as a scholar, by venturing on the slippery road of extemporaneous preaching!" Indeed? This is that very spirit of pride that wishes to lead the enchanted listeners on a high plane.

Our Lord and the Apostles walked humbly afoot, their language was so plain that even a child could understand. You want to shine before these humble people. You would dazzle them with your wit and brilliant rhetoric? You are giving them a glistening stone instead of a piece of wholesome bread. Would you rather confuse than

enlighten them? Are you the shepherd of this flock, or are you a hired lecturer, at so much per night, like some Chautauqua speaker, who repeats his lesson a hundred times? And then you talk of Sacred Eloquence!

Nor did I say to preach without preparation. Far from it. Suppose I am stationed in a small town, or in a country mission. My auditors are of a small number and uncertain, often mixed with non-Catholics. This condition is due to numerous mixed marriages, to social contact in the community, and to other special occasions where courtesy or sympathy brings "the other sheep" into our church. I know every one by sight, a fact that makes preaching to them still harder. I do not select the subject for them, rather they select it for me, for I know what they would most like to know, what they would ask, had they the opportunity; therefore, I anticipate their questions, and I explain Holy Religion to them in the same spirit and with the same simplicity that our Blessed Lord showed. Of course, I must keep myself prepared for this task; I must keep up with the times, must be well informed on the religious questions of the day, as well as upon its foibles; I must understand the teachings of the different sects, noting whereon we agree and where we disagree. The certainty of truth, and my love for souls, must guide me in finding the right way. "*Attende tibi, et doctrinae; insta in illis. Hoc enim faciens, et teipsum salvum facies, et eos qui te audiunt.*"¹

Let us never forget to be kind and considerate of the feelings of those who differ with us. Let us remember

¹ I Tim., iv, 16.

that the heretics of to-day are not the same as those who apostatized directly. In the most cases, they are wrong without fault of their own. The amiable Pope Pius X said: "We cannot build up the Church on the ruins of charity." We need not prove to the Protestant that he is wrong; it is sufficient that we prove that the Catholic Church is the true Church of Christ, and give him the satisfaction of drawing his own conclusions. We ourselves make mistakes, and we mind it greatly when told that we are wrong. If, however, we are permitted to discover the fact for ourselves, we are proud that we have found the truth. Therefore, let us beware of controversial sermons: "*Stultas autem et sine disciplina quaestiones devita: sciens quia generant lites. Servum autem Domini non oportet litigare.*"¹ These words of the greatest missionary are aptly paraphrased by a prelate of our own country, the late Archbishop Ireland who in an essay on "The Church and Modern Society" writes thus: "It is not controversy, above all, biting controversy, not even argumentative discussion, that will bring souls to the Church; but rather, exposition touched with piety, explanation warmed with devotion: the presentation of Faith, not as a system to be accepted, but as the holding lovingly fast to what God has taught."

In other words, let us not trust too much to the power of syllogism in the task of saving souls, but let us rather build on God's help and grace.

When you enter the pulpit, go with two companions: love of souls, and prayer. Then speak from the book of

¹ II Tim., ii, 23, 24.

your heart and your faith. Your love will make you eloquent, your zeal will touch their hearts, your prayer will bring God's grace of conversion. Your hearers are few, and you know them all. The knowledge of their errors and of their ignorance will be the guide for your sermon. Of course, you must read sermons of recognized excellence, the more, the better. But do not commit them to memory, do not inflict them on this simple people. Learn from the industrious bee who knows well not to take the clover blossom to its hive, but cleverly extracts the sweet honey.

Preach to your people as if they came to your study to ask for information; as to the rest: "*Noli negligere gratiam, quae in te est; quae est tibi per prophetiam, cum impositione manuum presbyterii.*"¹

¹ I Tim., iv, 14.

-- VI --

DIVINE SERVICE

"Vide ministerium, quod accepisti in Domino, ut illud impleas."
(Col., iv, 7.)

OUR church services are commonly called Divine Service. This appellation will convey to us what can be consistently said under this caption. Our ministry is from God and is offered to God, therefore, our services are divine, and we must carry them out in as sublime a manner as possible. There is no matter of little importance in the *Opus Dei*. From the making of the sign of the cross to the consecration, from a simple genuflection to the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, the pious priest will consider himself as the minister of the Most High and in His very presence. "My sons, be not negligent: the Lord hath chosen you to stand before Him, and to minister to Him, and to worship Him, and to burn incense to Him."¹ Now, what was expected of the Levites of the Old Testament, St. Paul enjoins on the servants of the altar in the New Covenant: "Give no offense to anyone that our ministry be not blamed; but in all things let us exhibit ourselves as the ministers of God."²

Catholics who know the meaning of the ceremonies and are accustomed to them for years, can stand a great deal due to the inattentive and unedifying priest without being gravely scandalized, although these people are by no

¹ II Paralip., xxix, 11.

² II Cor., vi, 3, 4.

means indifferent to the beauty of Catholic Liturgy when it is carried out with full splendor of ceremonial and the piety of a devout priest. But what shall be said of our non-Catholic visitors? What is the reason why many of our best members hesitate to invite their Protestant neighbors to our services? They are not ashamed of the ceremonial, but alas! only too often have they cause to be ashamed of the way in which the ceremonies are performed. They could overlook the lack of decorum on the part of the servers, for they are only boys, but when the priest himself appears with his vestments awry, the chasuble caught under the left shoulder, the alb up on one side, and hung low on the other; his biretta tilted at a jaunty angle; unshaven; his shoes betraying the need of a brush, his gait the stride of an athlete rather than that of a dignified clerical gentleman — what must be said! if he is at the very altar, he lifts the alb to secure his handkerchief, or mayhap, a match box from his trouser pocket; if he raise his foot to strike the match with which to light the altar candles; if he slap the inattentive server, or shouts out viciously at someone who has left the door ajar; if he make his genuflections so rapidly that the eye can scarcely follow him; if he sway his body and curve his back in an unseemly manner; if he turn at the Dominus Vobiscum like a soldier on drill, make the sign of the cross with lightning-like speed; if his voice play in unnatural cadences, and those parts of the rubrics that are to be said *clara voce* be given without articulation or hint of punctuation; — no wonder, then, the sublime ceremonial appears as simply humbug to the non-Catholic visitor;

no wonder they come to think it a game invented by priests to extract money from credulous followers.

An elderly priest was once travelling with a party of non-Catholics; stopping at a place on the way to say Mass, the priest invited the party to come with him to the local church. Now, it was a very warm day and there were many flies in that church. The priest himself was very nervous, and he was quite bald. You can imagine the rest! His friends of course did not understand Latin, and even had they understood, it would not have been conducive to devotion, for the priest rattled it off at a breakneck speed, accompanying his words with violent thrusts at the flies that seemed to have a predilection for his pate and encircled him like a halo, that those present could scarcely repress their mirth. A lady of the company asked the priest in all sincerity, somewhat later: "Now, tell me, Father, do you really believe in all those things?"

I am afraid we priests burden ourselves with a terrible responsibility by the many scandals we have given at the altar, not only to the "adults" of our Faith, but also to the "children" outside the Church who would come and worship with us, if we did not repulse them. "Now when you sin thus against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ."¹ No wonder we hear from the lips of Protestants that "going to the Catholic Church is like going to a show." And yet, is there anything more dignified, more awe-inspiring, than the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, where body and mind unite — must

¹ I Cor., viii, 12.

unite — with the soul to do honor to God? I do not speak of the Real Presence which in itself must strain our attention to the utmost to do justice to the sacred rite; I speak of the congregation behind the celebrant, the congregation that sees him go through a series of actions that seem like a pantomime, devoid of spiritual significance, rather than the act of the Mass. Not every priest possesses natural grace of movement nor elasticity of step; but at least he can make the genuflection slowly, and touch his knee to the floor; his hands may be awkward, but he can make the sign of the cross so that it is recognized as such; he may have a defective articulation, or may lack a sonorous voice, but he can at least let the ring of sincerity and devotion be audible in the words of the Preface. “*Sanctificavit Dominus tabernaculum suum; quia haec est domus Dei, in qua invocabitur nomen eius.*”¹

Sometimes, with a thought to the non-Catholic visitors, regret is expressed that the most of our church services are conducted in Latin and therefore a sealed book to the uneducated. But is it not a fact that frequently the little we have in the vernacular is so rendered that it might quite as well be Arabic or Sanskrit so far as the understanding of the words is concerned.

The writer has seen a priest who had the habit of beginning the Hail Mary's after Mass at the end of the Last Gospel, and going down *per breviorē viam* managed to finish the three Hail Mary's before he knelt down, regardless of the fact that the congregation could not answer

¹ *Brev. Dedicacionis Eccles.*

even one. In another case, he recalls a certain missionary who was a powerful speaker and attracted numbers of non-Catholics to his sermons in a place where Protestants outnumbered Catholics twenty to one. This missionary insisted on saying the rosary every night before his sermon, and that was well. But how did he say it? He stood at the communion rail, facing the congregation; his tongue was fluent, and he seemed pressed for time, for he recited the first part of the Hail Mary in an inarticulate rhapsody, starting the next Hail Mary before the congregation could finish the last half. This devotion (?) lasted barely six minutes, and was then followed by a sermon of never less than an hour and a quarter! Many were heard to remark that they would rather have had more time given to prayer and less to the sermon.

The Stations of the Cross, Litanies, Consecration to the Sacred Heart, Acts of Faith, Hope, and Charity, Renewal of Baptismal Vows, etc., are other devotions that will make a deep impression upon our separated brethren if conducted or recited with the solemnity they have a right to expect in a church that claims to be the True Church of Christ, the Mother-Church of all Christendom.

The trouble with many of us is that we are too much like the slovenly merchant who has the best stock of goods, but is too careless to display them to his customers.

I must not omit a point that is very important in this connection. Do you realize that there are many more good preachers than good readers? Some years ago, I read in a Review that in a certain Protestant Seminary a

prize was offered to the most correct, intelligent and impressive reader of the Bible and Prayer book. Whether or not a prize is offered, every Catholic seminarian ought to be trained in that most important art of reading the Gospel, and the other devotions that are in the vernacular; as a rule, the edification of the congregation hinges on this. "*Fratres autem non per ordinem legant et cantent, sed qui aedificent audientes,*" says St. Benedict in his Holy Rule, referring to the public reader. The clear and correct reading of the Gospel is more effective than a sermon. If the reader is sure of his text, reads with correct inflection, puts the emphasis where it belongs, he gives a good interpretation of the passage he reads. The writer recalls how he once listened to the reading of the Gospel by the bishop of the diocese, and how he understood a passage then that had often puzzled him, simply through the inflection the bishop gave to a certain word. And more than once has the writer heard people say, after hearing a reading of the Gospel by a priest who read well, that now they understood better than ever before. I knew a man in a southern State who was anything but friendly to the Catholic Church. I had built a church in his town, and the Bishop came to bless it. This man was one of the audience and listened with evident interest to the very good sermon preached by His Lordship. Later, when this man was asked about the sermon, he seemed to know nothing about it, but time and again he dwelt on the lesson he had received from the making of the sign of the cross which the Bishop had the practice of making very slowly and pronouncing the words distinctly and

piously. The second point that had appealed to this man was the Bishop's edifying way of reading the Gospel, and the fact that all stood to listen to the reading.

Let us disabuse our mind of the idea that outsiders come merely out of curiosity. There are many souls among them who are hungry for the Truth. They ask us for bread, we must not give them a stone. Any of our services will appeal to them if we apply ourselves to make those services attractive and devotional. Have you ever noticed how well they behave in our churches, often much better than in their own. There is a Voice — it must come from the tabernacle — that says to them "Locus, in quo stas, terra sancta est."¹ The famous convert, Dr. Albert von Ruville, tells us in his book "Back to Mother Church," of his own experience when groping for the truth: "With equal devotion I participated in the Lutheran, Reformed, and Anglican services, but when I attended the Catholic church, it was only my ignorance of Catholic practice, and my fear to attract too much attention, that held me back from a hearty participation, toward which I was strongly drawn."

We generally assume that Protestants remain seated during the Gospel and at Benediction to show their protest against our practices. But this is not always the case. A young man, frequently seen at our evening services, came to me one day and asked whether or not it were correct for him to stand or kneel in church as the Catholics did. I told him it was most certainly the proper thing to do, and I asked him why he thought he had to ask

¹ Exodus, iii, 5.

my permission. He answered that the Catholic friends he had accompanied impressed it on him repeatedly that he need not stand nor kneel, so he had come to the conclusion that it was against our rules to permit Protestants to take part in our services. I told him to do as his heart prompted. In due time, this man became a very devout Catholic. For years I had the consolation to see Protestants attend our services, especially on Sunday evenings when there was always a short sermon, besides the customary Benediction. While they were respectful enough, it often grieved me to see them sit rigidly in their pews, while the Catholics knelt, or stood. I invited an old missionary to deliver a series of sermons to non-Catholics; a generous number of them was present at the first sermon. The missionary took up the Bible, instead of the ordinary Gospel Book, and said: "Brethren, I am going to read to you from the Holy Book, the Bible, and I ask you to stand up out of respect for the Word of God." I was surprised at his audacity, but still more surprised to see the effect, for they responded with the greatest alacrity, and as if they felt relief to be thus recognized. From that hour, through the whole mission, the same thing was repeated every night; in all that time, I saw but two persons, notorious bigots, who declined to rise for the reading of the Gospel. Indeed, "who shall hesitate to call the house of the Lord sacred, when he sees what happens there?" (St. Bernard)

St. Vincent de Paul converted many through his piety in saying Mass; so too, every priest can be a missionary in every one of his sacred ministrations; and he should be

mindful of the promise of the Great Apostle: "Qui enim bene ministraverint, gradum bonum sibi acquirent."¹
"When you enter the sanctuary, act as if you were entering heaven itself; neither speak, nor do anything that flavors after the earth."²

"Haec tibi scribo . . . ut scias, quomodo oporteat te in domo Dei conversari, quae est Ecclesia Dei vivi, columna et firmamentum veritatis."³

¹ I Tim., iii, 13.

² St. Nilus.

³ I Tim., iii, 14, 15.

-- VII --

SPECIAL OCCASIONS

"I charge thee before God and Jesus Christ, who shall judge the living and the dead, by His coming, and His kingdom: preach the word; be instant in season, out of season: reprove, entreat, rebuke in all patience and doctrine." (II Tim., iv, 1, 2.)

SOME outsiders come to the Catholic Church on special occasions who otherwise would never cross its portals. Funerals, weddings, the dedication of a new church, the blessing of a new school, confirmation, the forty hour's devotion, flag raising, and last, but by no means least, a mission will always attract a number of Protestants. A priest who makes these words of the Psalmist his own "The zeal of thy house hath eaten me up,"¹ will welcome such occasions to spread God's truth among the dissenters, "redeeming the time, because the days are evil."² It is indeed hard to understand how a priest could stand idly by when he sees hundreds of people within reach of his teaching ministry who are, unfortunately, outside the pale of the Church, deprived of the Truth, of the Sacraments and other means of salvation, and not be willing to make extraordinary efforts to carry the boon of Faith to them. "You do not love your neighbor as yourself, if you do not try to put him in possession of the same good after which you yourself are striving."³ Great will be the responsibility of those ministers who idle away the

¹ Psalm, xlviii, 10.

² Ephes., v, 16.

³ St. Augustine, "De Moribus."

opportunities God hath brought to them. "During an idle hour we lose as much glory as we could have done good works during that time."¹ The vitality of Catholicity depends very much on such special efforts to reach outsiders at times when they come of their own accord to be witnesses of Catholic practices. Dr. Brownson, noted convert and philosopher aptly says: "The most fatal sign of a want of true Catholic life in any Catholic population is the little effort it makes for the conversion of non-Catholics." A zealous French missionary said that he always transformed his Advents and Lents into missions. A zealous priest in a country like this will do no less. Not only Advent and Lent will furnish him with occasions for short missions, but he will make funerals, weddings, dedications, and even sick calls, an occasion of approach to non-Catholics.

Let the priest not fear that he will be an innovator; the Council of Trent itself gives the seal of approbation to such ministrations, by the following exhortation: "Hence, not only on Sundays and festivals of the year, but also daily, or at least three times a week, throughout Advent and Lent, ought the pastors of the faithful make known the Sacred Scriptures and the law of God."² Thus in preaching in season and out of season, the priest not only follows the example of St. Paul, but the example of Christ Himself, who never permitted a chance to escape for preaching the Gospel to the poor: sometimes in the Temple, sometimes in the synagogue at Capharnaum; again, in the house of a pharisee, or from the shore of the

¹ St. Bonaventure, "In Vita." ² Council of Trent, Sess. 24.

lake, or from the mountain in the wilderness. He did not always make converts, but He gave his hearers the opportunity, and if they resisted, the fault was their own. Preaching the word of God is the supreme work of charity "for the word of God gives medicine for the sick, light to the blind, bread to the hungry, wine to the thirsty, fire to the freezing, a shield to the unarmed, consolation to the abandoned." ¹

It is understood that on such special occasions the sermon be not on a general subject, nor long-drawn out; great care is to be taken to show due consideration toward all. It is a most unfortunate time to attack the religious preferences of outsiders at funerals or at weddings. A certain priest, possessed of more zeal than prudence, selected for the subject of his sermon at a funeral which brought the better class of Protestants to his church "The Four Marks of the True Church." He retained as a matter of boast ever after that before he had finished, he had driven every Protestant from the building. Doubtless, he did: but what good did that do for him, for our holy Faith, for the mortified members of his parish, or to the Protestants who had come to pay an act of respect and sympathy to their fellow-townsmen, and who had been driven away filled with anger and shame? Is it not our aim and duty to attract them, rather than repulse? There are so many truths in our holy religion that could be profitably explained at a funeral; such as, preparing for death, the last sacraments, praying for the dead, purgatory, etc. All such subjects edify a Protestant

¹ Cardinal Hugo on "Psalm lvii."

audience and will, moreover, be a consolation to the mourners themselves. But these addresses must be clear and short. The preacher must bear in mind the length of the services, the journey to the cemetery, the sadness and weariness of the mourners; nor should he lose sight of the fact that the greater number of the attendants at a funeral are there as a courtesy to the bereaved family and their time is precious.

Cardinal Gibbons thought that funerals are exceptional occasions where great good can be achieved. "Another opportunity for making a salutary impression on our separated brethren, as well as on members of the congregation, will often present itself on the occasion of funerals, especially in communities in which Catholics and Protestants have intimate social and family relations with one another. In the presence of the angel of death the human heart is profoundly moved by the solemn voice of religion . . . and sectarian prejudice is softened and subdued. It is also a suitable time for alluding to the immediate state in the life to come, and to the Catholic practice of praying for the dead. This consoling doctrine is at once suggestive of the soul's survival beyond the tomb, and of the hallowed communion by prayers subsisting between the living and the deceased. It mitigates the sorrow of separation, and contains an implied rebuke to the dreary and despairing creed of annihilation after death. Though not in harmony with the religious opinions of a portion of the audience, a discourse on this theme, delivered amid the solemn funereal surroundings, cannot fail to commend itself to their reason, their

sympathies, their yearnings, and to their religious sense. In a supreme moment like this, the human soul, naturally Christian, will assert itself. It will rise superior to the prejudices of education, and to the traditions and conventionalities of popular creeds:

‘Truth from his lips prevailed with double sway,
And fools who came to scoff, remained to pray.’”¹

Catholic weddings, especially in the smaller towns, are a magnet that attract throngs of the curious. However, the disposition, on these occasions, for assimilating salutary truths is not so good as in the former case. Women and children predominate and there is much lightness and whispering. It will devolve upon the officiating clergyman to infuse the proper religious spirit into such an audience. He should by all means give an earnest and explicit address on the sacredness of the Sacrament of Matrimony, its duties and responsibilities, and the indissolubility of the bond. These and other truths impressively delivered, together with a dignified carrying out of the ceremonies, the devout receiving of Holy Communion by the bridal couple will soon banish the foolish smiles of the idle curious, and will help them to realize the words of St. Paul: “*Sacramentum hoc magnum est: ego autem dico in Christo et in Ecclesia.*”²

Do not call me a crank if I suggest that sometimes it is praiseworthy to preach even at a baptism! The occasion would be favorable if there be present a number of non-Catholics; e.g.: at the reception of a convert, or when the

¹ The Ambassador of Christ.

² Ephes., v, 32.

Sacrament of Regeneration is conferred before the entire congregation, immediately before, or after the Sunday Mass, which occasionally happens in mission churches where there is no resident priest. The ceremonies of baptism are strange to the uninformed. Of this class are many Catholics; either they have never taken any particular notice of the ceremonies, or having seen them often, no longer find anything remarkable in them. But it is different with the Protestant: he sees the priest breathe into the face of the recipient; he sees him lay his hand upon the head of the person receiving the sacrament, touch his nose and ears with spittle, anoint him with oil. Would you send this outsider away, contemning our sacred ceremonies, to tell others of them as superstitious? Is it not wiser to instruct him about the ceremonies just performed, either *viva voce*, or by giving him a pamphlet on the subject? Baptism is one of those subjects we can speak on at any time before non-Catholics and be always assured of undivided attention; because this is the bone of contention among Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians, Disciples, and others. Baptism is the one subject they are ever ready to discuss, to ask questions about. From time to time, set forth the doctrine on Original Sin and the necessity of regeneration. You may not make an adult convert, but you may be the cause that at least one child receives baptism before its death. Let us remember that the soul of even the unborn babe is immortal and created for heaven.

Another occasion for a concourse of people is the coming of the Bishop for Confirmation, or to dedicate a

church, or bless a school, or a bell, or for his regular visit of canonical inspection. As a rule, the Bishop will preach; but if you know he will not, be sure to invite a good and zealous priest who is a capable speaker, one whom you know has the gift of speaking before a mixed audience. The coming of the Bishop is usually well known and arouses considerable interest and no little curiosity. The Protestants will tell themselves: "The Catholics are making special efforts, now is the time to go and see what they do." But alas! Great harm to the cause of religion has been done many a time on just such occasions. I have heard distinguished preachers say things to their non-Catholic hearers so cruel, so cutting, so damning that these listeners never again would enter our churches. The fact the preacher possessed an exceptional gift of oratory made matters only the worse. It was said "He told the truth; how could he help it if the hearers felt embarrassed? Should he have sacrificed Divine Truth to congeniality?" Certainly not; but St. Francis de Sales tells us: "Truth must always be charitable; for bitter zeal does harm instead of good."

"I have always maintained," he continues, "that he who preaches with love, preaches sufficiently against heresy, without introducing one word of controversy. Certainly during the thirty years in which God called me to the sacred work of feeding my people with His word, I have observed that earnest sermons on matters of practical holiness are as so many live coals cast among Protestants; they listen, they are edified, and become more accessible to doctrinal teaching."¹

¹ Spirit of St. Francis de Sales.

Lenten sermons are another source of spiritual profit. Our people know that we will make special effort to have these sermons interesting and instructive; hence, they bring with them their non-Catholic neighbors. There is, first of all, the beautiful devotion of the Stations of the Cross. This devotion is paramount to a good sermon, provided that the prayers and meditations are recited distinctly and devoutly. The haste, or the perfunctory manner in which the Stations are often made, so to lose their stirring effect cannot be sufficiently condemned. The lenten sermon itself need not be taken from the Passion of our Lord. A program of lectures on the sacraments, Christ and His Church, The Christian Family, Man and Religion; on the perils of a godless age, etc., announced in the local paper, or broadcast by neat folders, or handbills, should be sufficient to attract the attention of your fellow citizens, and incite in them a desire to hear what you have to say.

A certain young priest, laboring in one of the roughest mission districts of the Middle States, evolved a novel plan that worked out successfully. He prepared a series of Lenten Sermons and remained for a week in each one of his different mission stations, delivering a sermon each night. His people called it a "mission" and attendance was better than he could have expected, judging from former experiences. This plan gave him time to prepare a class of First Communicants at each station, and he had the happiness besides to bring back a few Catholic families that had fallen away, and to baptize their children. He was proud to note that every one of his flock,

on these mission stations, made his Easter duty that year. The non-Catholics who attended these sermons declared that the sermons on the Sacred Passion, followed by the Stations of the Cross and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament had done them more good and brought them closer to the Catholic Church than the eloquent sermons previously preached to them by a regular missionary. This again shows that it is not always the man who most moves the heart, but the occasion itself, and the spirit of the season acting under the grace of God.

Not the most gifted speaker, nor he of the loudest voice, nor the most polished rhetorician is the best preacher; but he who combines a burning zeal for souls with a prayerful heart. Let us pray continually for our flock, not only for those within the fold, but also and especially for those who through no fault of their own have gone astray. On the eve of His passion, Christ Himself prayed thus: "As thou hast sent me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. And not for them only do I pray, but also for them who through their word shall believe in me: that they all may be one, as we also are one . . . and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou also hast loved me."¹

¹ John, xvii, 20 *et seq.*

-- VIII --

MISSIONS TO NON-CATHOLICS

"Rogate ergo Dominum messis, ut mittat operarios in messem suam."
(Luke, x, 2.)

THE pastor of souls who has due regard for his responsibility will not be satisfied with his own efforts, but from time to time will invite a brother priest to assist him in his holy endeavors to save souls. The true shepherd is not afraid of being overshadowed by the superior skill of another; on the contrary, he will rejoice that good work is done in the name of God. "Whoever labors in the field of the Lord," says Dr. Brownson, "should rejoice alike if the work is done, whether it is done by himself or another, whether the glory of doing it redounds to himself or to his brethren. We all serve our Master, and a Master who will let no one go without his reward."

The practice in this country of giving missions to non-Catholics dates back many years, and has been encouraged by the zealous Bishops of America. Of particular importance, however, is the letter of Pope Leo XIII to Cardinal Gibbons, dated April 15, 1902. Among other things therein noted, the great Pontiff says: "You have wisely taken measures to enlighten dissidents and to draw them to the truth by appointing learned and worthy members of the clergy to go about from district to district to address them in public in familiar style, in churches

and other buildings, and to solve the difficulties that may be advanced. It is an excellent plan, and one which We know has already borne abundant fruit."

In another famous Encyclical,¹ the same Pope writes: "We think there are very many among you who differ from Catholics rather through ignorance, than because of any disposition of the will, who perchance if the truth is put before them in a familiar and friendly manner, may more easily be led to the one sheepfold of Christ." Pope Pius X, not to be outdone in zeal for souls, commends the same missionary activity in a letter to the same Cardinal, dated September 5, 1908. He says: "It pleases Us that they (the missionaries to non-Catholics) show no bitterness in their preaching, and their only purpose is a true and complete exposition of Catholic doctrines, which methods much more easily open the door of the true faith to non-Catholics. For great is the power of truth, and nothing more is required to make men love it than to know it intimately."

We can readily see from the words of the Holy Father that one of the conditions under which the success of such missions is assured, is the personal prudence, tact, and zeal of the missionary himself. There are many professional missionaries in the country, all of whom, no doubt, are well qualified for their noble work. It would be a mistake, however, to assume that a man who attracts large audiences and makes the deepest impression on his hearers in a church in a great city in the East, could just as surely find the way to the hearts of the

¹ "Testem Benevolentiae," January 22, 1899.

people of a struggling parish in Idaho or Texas. Nor is it the same thing to preach a mission to non-Catholics in the city of New York, or in some university town, — with its materialists, theosophists, and spiritualists, — as to preach Catholic Doctrine to the native Kentucky mountaineers, or the socialist West Virginia coal miners. These are an altogether different type of character, varying greatly in culture and principles, rearing and education, habits and views, vices and virtues, from the citizens of the great metropolis.

The missionary must know the people whom he is to address; he should have a general idea, at least, of the religious views and leanings, of their intellectual capacity, and especially of the predominating weakness and pet prejudices of the locality. A mission does not last long enough for experimenting, or feeling the way. Every sermon must score a point, because if the preacher does not make himself plainly understood, or if he fail to interest his hearers from the very first day, they may not return for another sermon. Hence, pastors should be most careful in selecting a missionary for their congregations. The fact that the missionary is a pious man, or a good speaker, or a brilliant controversialist, is not a full guarantee of success. There are missionaries who are especially trained for just this kind of work, but even among them there may be some who will do more harm than good. I have seen missionaries give missions, preach to throngs, explain Catholic dogma; I have heard them prove our religion right and all others wrong; have seen them leave the poor pastor behind in a cloud of dissatis-

faction, bitter feelings, and prejudices, rather revived than allayed; in fact, I have seen the whole population in a state of turmoil that boded no good to the religious peace of the community.

It is, therefore, no easy task to select a missionary for a congregation where particular attention must be paid to the "other sheep" who present themselves on such occasions to hear the voice of the true shepherd. Nor do we always find the missionary in sympathy with our own ideas of dealing with a mixed audience. He will probably smile when you attempt to tell him how to treat your people. He has been trained in a superior school for his work, and naturally questions your competency to give him advice. Also: he has his sermons ready for delivery, written down to the least detail, and committed to memory! He may not be good in extempore speaking, or he may be strictly forbidden to preach a sermon that has not been submitted to the censor of his Order. Anyone can judge that such stereotyped sermons are not always suitable for a small country town, that they will not fill the want there. Sometimes they are too high flown; more often, they are not to the point, touching on conditions that do not exist among your own people.

You will do well, then, to secure the services of a missionary whom you yourself personally know; or one with whose principles and methods you are acquainted through some judicious brother priest. Several religious orders have one or two men set apart for just such work; in several dioceses there exist mission bands whose members, like their religious colleagues, have had a year's special

training at the Apostolic Mission House. As a rule, these priests will give the most satisfaction, because they have had experience in the work. If they live in your own State, so much the better, because they will feel more at home with their listeners, and will be able to give to their lectures more local color. In addition to the religious motive, these men will feel urged by more human ambition to make a success in the locality which they hope to visit again. It is otherwise with the missionary who lives a thousand miles away and who knows that in all probability he will never see your congregation again.

If no trained missionary is available for your non-Catholic mission, you might make arrangements with some zealous neighboring priest to give the mission. Small mission bands are often formed, consisting of the priests stationed in an out-of-the-way district; these alternate several times a year, giving a series of lectures for mixed audiences in one another's territory. Unhappily, these mission undertakings do not last long, as there is no binding system connected with it, and because of the frequent changes of the priests in a diocese. If neither of the foregoing plans is feasible, let the pastor be his own missionary. In advising to this effect, the writer is not promoting an empty theory. He has tried it more than once, and without wishing to be boastful, he can say he did so with gratifying results. It may not be wise to try this in your own parish church where people hear you preach regularly throughout the year, but if you are situated as the writer was for twenty years, having charge of several stations where Mass was said but once a month,

or even less frequently, it may be well worth your while to try the experiment.

Let us assume that you have a mission thirty miles distant, of perhaps a dozen families. Probably almost half will be of the mixed marriage type. In some cases the wife is a Protestant, the children unbaptized, but occasionally this mother brings them to Mass and instructions. You have heard of others who have inquired about Catholic practices. Such a place is the ideal for your own mission. Make out your program; study your sermons; print little cards of invitation with the list of sermons appended; and be sure to announce that you will answer any question on Catholic subjects that may be asked. Advertise the mission in the local newspaper; put up a notice in the post office; or run a slide in the Movie Emporium.

On the very first day form a class in Christian Doctrine; invite personally the children, especially those of mixed marriages, then their parents, the non-Catholics, and finally all others who show a special interest in our religion. Visit the home of every Protestant who comes to your church; tell them you are glad to see them among your audience, and ask them what keeps them from joining our church. You need not be too shy about this. Often they expect and sometimes they desire this very question; seldom do they resent it. Their preachers are not so reticent about asking people to join churches! More than once, converts have said that long ago they would have become Catholics if anyone had asked them. Insist that all children attend. They are attending the

public school and instructing them is almost identical with instructing Protestants. If you have a convert under instruction have such a one present also. Women who cannot come in the evening should be urged to come for the catechism, especially those women who are Protestant, or who have careless Catholic husbands.

Your love for your own flock, your knowledge of their habits and hobbies, the respect they feel for you, will make up for any deficiency you might suffer as an orator or experienced missionary. Do not underestimate your own powers. If you do this work for the love of souls, and not for earthly glory, God will help you and bless your undertaking. "*Si enim Dominus magnus voluerit, spiritu intelligentiae replebit illum; et ipse tamquam imbres mittet eloquia sapientiae suae, et in oratione confitebitur: et ipse diriget consilium eius*"

In making out the program of lectures, it will help us to probe the different reasons why Protestants object to us. Intelligent converts will be of great help in determining this important point. Dr. von Ruville tells us that the principal objections he felt against the Catholic Church were these: Papal Infallibility; Adoration (?) of the Blessed Virgin; Transubstantiation; Celibacy; Indulgences, and the restriction of free research. If you add to this list of supposed Catholic "errors": man's power to forgive sins, and "praying the dead out of hell," you will most probably have a summary of "popish heresies" that will cover the whole maze of Protestant prejudices. Make your sermons as popular as you can, but do not

¹ Eccclus. xxxix, 8, 9, 10.

seek oratorical effect by using high-sounding phrases. Père Monsabrè tells us that the only success a preacher is allowed to seek is the glory of God and the good of souls. Remember that our Lord asked St. Peter three times "Lovest thou Me?" and when He was assured of Peter's loyalty, He told him: "Feed my sheep." So, you also, before breaking the bread of God's truth to these souls, ask yourself: "Do I love my God? Do I love the souls of these men and women before me?" If you can answer honestly in the affirmative, then like St. Peter preach the Gospel to them. "Neglect not the grace that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the imposition of the hands of the priesthood." ¹

If you are imbued with this love of souls, there is no danger you will stoop to invective, no risk of your hurting the feelings of others. You will forget that there are dissenters among your hearers; you will simply explain to them Catholic Doctrine as to children who have not heretofore known it, but who will believe you and will try to understand better. You will see that you can preach your religion and prove it to be the true one. Those who are intelligent enough to follow your logical discourse will find out for themselves that they are in the wrong, and having arrived at this conclusion of their own accord, the revelation of their error will lose its sting.

On the other hand, antagonism begets antagonism, because it is natural to human pride to resent being accused of being in the wrong. You could speak for a whole week to non-Catholics without irritating their

¹ I Tim., iv, 14.

sensibilities; you need not even let them suspect that you are aware of the presence of any who dissent. Tell them the truth taught by the Catholic Church in such a matter-of-fact way that it may seem you are taking it for granted that all are on your side. Make the truth so plain and convincing, that to assume your hearers were not with you would be an insult to their intelligence. They will listen with rapt attention, and carried away by your method of imparting truth, by the reasonableness of our claims, and by the logic of our arguments, they will, while being unaware of the fact, be drawn closer to the Church.

Of course you will need to distribute Catholic literature among those who attend the mission. There should be no difficulty in obtaining the necessary supply from various institutions; thus: Church Extension, the Apostolic Missionary Union, Truth Society, Tabernacle Societies, the nearest K. of C. Council, or from your own Chancery. It is not wise to distribute large and expensive books indiscriminately. Have some pamphlets ready to distribute as the congregation leaves the church. After the sermon you could announce that those who may wish to read more extensively can have books of more detailed information on request. Your own observation of those who attend will aid you in knowing where such books could be productive of most good; as a rule, people are too shy to ask for them.

The Question Box is naturally a feature of Missions to non-Catholics. The purpose of this device is to discover the mind of the audience, and to afford opportunity for

information on such subjects as are not touched on in the regular lectures. By all means, let it be a bona fide Question Box; that is, do not "stuff" it yourself, imitating in a clumsy fashion the style and spelling of an imaginary bigot, or an ignorant non-Catholic.¹ Place the question box where the inquirer may deposit his slip unobserved. If you can set it up in the local post office, or in one of the larger stores, the questions will be numerous. The patronage of the question box is very uncertain. Sometimes you may be compelled to shorten the sermon in order to answer the questions; at another time, nobody seems to take much interest in it. It would be well to start the movement by explaining on the first night how to make use of the Question Box. Read some questions that have been asked in former missions, and answer them, as a model of how questions may be put and will be answered. Soon some Catholic will tell you that Mrs. Blank wants to know this or that. Ask her to put the question in writing and put it in the box. This will break the ice, and probably there will be no further dearth of material. Do not think, however, that answering the questions is a minor matter. On the contrary, to many people, the answering of the questions will mean more than the sermon itself. They may tell you quite frankly, with little consideration of your skill as a pulpit orator, that they would rather have all questions! Of course they do not realize that the sermon of to-day

¹ Otherwise it may happen to you, as it has happened to others, and more than once! that some sturdy believer of the Celtic race, a representative of the Church Militant, tells you that if he knew "the darn fool who put in all those crazy questions" he would teach him a thing or two!

prompts the question of to-morrow. This being so, I do not hesitate to maintain that more missions are spoiled by the handling of the Question Box than by some provoking or irritating manner of preaching. The reason is that for a young and inexperienced preacher the temptation to pose as a wit before an audience is overwhelming; for the older missionary, the trouble is often a matter of impatience and sarcasm. One evening an old missionary, very well known, opened the question box before a large audience; this was the question he read aloud: "Please, Father, explain why priests do not marry." He gave a dissatisfied grunt, and put the question aside with this remark: "Pshaw! some old maid that got left!" Of course the congregation smiled; there were some who laughed aloud, but the one who had written it did not smile. She was a pious Catholic lady who knew the answer well enough, but who had promised some Protestant friends to put the question in and have the famous missionary answer it. I doubt if this Catholic lady ever again took Protestant friends to a mission! And then we complain that Catholics do not help us by bringing Protestants to the services. They are afraid of what we may do to them via the Question Box.

"Why do not priests marry?" is a question that will come as sure as the spring follows the winter. You may just as well have your answer ready, and let it be a good answer. This question may mean much more to you and to your ultimate success than you imagine. There is a deep underlying stratum of suspicion and insinuation in the question; your reputation as a moral man is probably

involved, and only by giving the beautiful reasons for clerical celibacy can you quiet that suspicion, and impress them with a high esteem for the priestly state. Beginners are usually warned against answering questions the same night they are taken from the box; but that is the very thing they do, and certainly not to the advantage of the good cause. They should answer the simpler ones, and read the others with the promise to answer them the next evening. This course would cause the interested persons to return the next night, and would give the priest time to prepare a correct and concise answer. There is one point that cannot be too deeply impressed upon the priest who handles the questions: Never poke fun at the questioner; never note grammatical errors; never make a remark about faulty spelling, or the poor quality of the paper; never display a sneering, sarcastic, or contemptuous manner. If you do any one of these things, the usefulness of the Question Box has come to an abrupt termination. Trifling questions must be ignored; do not by any means read them out. Simply state that several questions have been asked through the Question Box, that have no reference to Catholic Doctrine and hence cannot be answered. After that, you may notice the absence of certain light-hearted youngsters from the evening services!

Let us not be disheartened if our audience be small. Time was when a missionary priest could have a large audience anywhere. We are now in the age of the Lodge, Klan activity, Moving Pictures, Radio, night motoring, and the appreciation of lectures has decreased. We must be satisfied if in smaller towns we have a dozen non-

Catholics; we shall probably have a few more in the country. But the rule is: the smaller the audience, the greater the interest. St. Francis de Sales tells us how his bishop sent him to Chablais to preach. They could not hold services in the towns and cities because the country was filled with Huguenots; but they met in some out-of-the-way chapels where the faithful gathered for the Divine Service. The saint says:

“One Sunday the weather was very bad. It was my custom to preach after Mass; but this time somebody suggested to me that it was not worth the while to preach because there were but seven persons present. I answered that I was neither encouraged by large crowds, nor discouraged by small numbers; if but one would be edified by my discourse, it would be sufficient for me. Thus I ascended the pulpit and remember very well that I preached about the Invocation of Saints. I treated the subject very simply and without controversy, for you must know that is not my method and I detest anything that looks like aggressiveness. I used neither pathos nor vituperation; and yet, one of the audience who was by no means of low rank, began to weep bitterly and moaned and groaned so loud I thought he had taken sick and I asked him whether I should stop and come to his relief. But he signified to me that I was to continue, saying that his body was well and as to his soul, I was just applying the remedy needed. After the sermon, which was very short, he threw himself at my feet and exclaimed with a loud voice: ‘Father Provost, to-day you have given my life back to me. To-day you saved my soul. Blessed be

the hour in which I came hither and heard your sermon. This hour decides for all eternity.' I cannot describe the impression this great example made in all that country, and how amenable it made the hearts of others to receive the Word of Life and Truth. I could tell many other and some strange cases of conversions which gave me such a predilection for small assemblies that I feel never more content than when I enter the pulpit and see a small audience" (Camus).

"Noli despicere animam pro qua Christus mortuus est."¹ God will give the increase to those who sow with zeal the seed of the word in the vineyard of the Lord, and He will repay with a most joyous harvest in this life, and an eternal reward in the next, the labors of the faithful workers."²

¹ Hieron., Ep., 16.

² Pius X: Letter to Cardinal Gibbons, Sept. 5, 1908.

— IX —

SUNDAY EVENING SERMONS

“Protraxitque sermonem usque in mediam noctem.” (Acta apost.,
xx, 7.)

CERTAIN clergymen who are friends of ease, but not of the office of preaching, are ever ready to contend that it is not well to preach too much, that the principal service of the Catholic Church is the Holy Sacrifice. A short talk on Sundays and Holy Days of obligation is not amiss during Mass, they say; but the priest who preaches oftener is suspected of being an innovator, a would-be reformer. I know of a certain priest, who is not without his human failings; still he is not criticized so much for those failings, as he is reproached for one grievous fault (?), namely, he not only preaches every Sunday morning, but also every Sunday night! This seems to be the unpardonable sin in the eyes of critical confreres.

It is hard to find the reason for such a state of mind, unless it is that those who do not wish to preach often are put to greater exertion to find excuses for their shortcomings in face of the greater zeal shown by others. The Bishop of Belley tells us that he entreated St. Francis de Sales not to preach twice every day, namely, every morning and evening, that this remonstrance was caused by solicitude for the poor state of health of St. Francis. The Saint answered him with a smile, saying that it cost him much less worry to preach than to find excuse for refusing

when invited to perform that sacred function. "God," he said, "appointed me a pastor and a preacher; and is not every one to follow his profession?"

It is true, the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is the principal service in the Catholic Church, but this does not necessarily imply that it must take up more time than the office of preaching. The institution of the Blessed Sacrament took only a few minutes, whereas the Sermon on the Mount, the sermon from the boat, and the farewell sermon to the disciples lasted much longer. Moreover: for three years before the institution of the Holy Eucharist, Christ taught daily, preaching to the multitudes, some times all day, so that He was very tired at night. Note how brief was His command to celebrate the Eucharist, and how long, and explicit the commission to go forth and preach the Gospel. The Child Jesus, twelve years old, teaches us the importance of the Word of God, when He remains three days in the temple, engaged about His Father's business. Ecclesiasticus tells us: "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening let not thy hand rest."¹ Likewise: "The levites are to stand in the morning to give thanks, and sing praises to the Lord, and in like manner in the evening."²

The practice of few and short sermons may be condoned in well-regulated parishes, where all have gone through the long course of religious instructions in the parochial school, and are therefore well instructed in the catechism; all they need is an occasional freshening of their religious sense. But, my dear Confreres, is this the

¹ Ecclus., xi, 6.

² I Par., xxiii, 30.

case in your parish? Let us presume that you are in charge of a mission district comprising a parish of less than thirty families. There is no Catholic school; Christian Doctrine is but irregularly taught by you yourself; the lay catechists on the missions barely succeed in imparting the most essential knowledge of religion to the children. The adults are not much better off. Many of them are so-called Catholics, vacillating between duty and inclination. Their friends and companions, often enough members of their own household, are Protestants from whom they have acquired the spirit of independence. For generations this place had no regular shepherd. At one time they were in charge of a foreign-born priest who could scarcely understand their language; then came one who was old and sick, so he could not visit the missions during the winter season; then followed a pastor who did not believe in preaching, except when certain collections fell due. Is it any wonder that Catholics living in that district are not what they ought to be? That they are but poorly instructed? That they marry out of the Church, and are indifferent to the religious education of their children? Is it any wonder that they are unable to be of any help to the Protestant inquirer into our Fold? The people need more preaching, need simple preaching.

Let us learn a lesson from the non-Catholic Churches. In any Protestant meeting house, even the smallest, there are morning and evening services, and in the middle of the week there is a prayer-meeting. At all these services there is preaching. When the bells of every church in town are ringing, and their windows lighted up, our bells

remain silent, our windows dark, because the priest in charge says "it is not well to preach too much." But in all probability, he will the following Sunday fulminate from the altar against certain young people of the parish because he has heard they were seen in a Protestant church. Why did he not open his own church to them? He is angry because they went to hear a Protestant sermon — why did he not preach a Catholic sermon to them? Where does he expect the younger members of his flock to go on Sunday night, if not to church? Had there been services in the Catholic church, in all likelihood most of the Catholics and several Protestants would have been present. We can think of the Protestants as saying: "We would like to go to your church, but in the morning we cannot get there in time, and in the evening you have no services." If they ask me why so few priests conduct evening services, I am embarrassed for an answer. Shall I tell these people that the priests do not believe in so much preaching? Suppose they answer "Christ sent His Apostles to preach the Gospel to all nations, and St. Paul did so 'in season and out of season,'" for "woe be to me if I preach not the Gospel."

If therefore you are in charge of a small flock in a country town, surrounded by the temples of heresy, and if a number of your people live near the church, you will find it difficult to get an excuse for not ringing your church bells every Sunday night, and preaching the Word of God to your people. You will find, however, that this evening sermon is not such a strain as that of the morning, because you are not fasting and you have had all after-

noon to rest up from the morning. You also have more latitude in the choice of a subject, as you are not bound to the Gospel of the day. You will find that dogmatic sermons are very much appreciated, and that they soon draw interested Protestants to your church. Again: instead of preaching set sermons, you might give a series of popular instructions on Christian Doctrine, the Apostles Creed, the Sacraments, etc. Or you could read chapters from books of meditation, from the Imitation, certain selections from the New Testament, recite the Rosary, and always close with Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. Your heart and your own experience will tell you how to make the program for Sunday night both interesting and helpful to a mixed audience.

Such services are good convert makers. It is true the grace of conversion comes to the truth-seeker principally through the Real Presence in the Catholic Church, but it is through the Sunday night service that the portal is opened to a better understanding of the Eucharistic God to the average convert. An experience of twenty-five years has taught me that for one Protestant who comes to Mass, there are five who will come to our Sunday night services. Only when their knowledge has expanded, and if they do not resist the Grace of God, will they come to Mass. Whenever they have reached that state of advancement that they attend Mass with the awe of a believer in the Real Presence, we may count them as prospective Catholics.

Nor must it discourage us that they seem to balk at the doctrine of the Eucharist. If Christ's beautiful

sermon recorded in St. John had the effect of driving his hearers away, because His "words were hard and who could hear them?" and only His most intimate followers believed in this sublime doctrine, we must not expect that at the first explanation of the Holy Eucharist our hearers should cry out in unison, "to whom else shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life."¹ The respectful attitude which most of our visitors maintain during Benediction shows that grace is working within them, and if we persevere in preaching and praying, in due time their conversion will ensue, and we shall find ourselves amply rewarded for efforts and sacrifices made.

Our Sunday night services are, furthermore, a safeguard for Catholics, especially for the young people. How many times are they invited by their non-Catholic friends to go with them to their meetings, an invitation often difficult to decline without giving serious offence. If we have sermon and Benediction in our own church, these young people have an excellent excuse under plea that they must go to their own church. Thus they often come to church though they had not perhaps previously planned doing so, and their near neighbors sometimes come with them and "worship" with them. In a certain town, attended by the writer, the quite general custom was that of Catholics going to the Protestant church; he was the first resident priest in the locality. He inaugurated the Sunday night services and kept it up, year after year, rain or shine, no matter how small the attendance; the result was that the abuse above referred to

¹ John., vi, 69.

ceased; moreover: as a rule, the evening services were well attended, as well in fact as was the High Mass of the morning with the sermon. The Catholics of this town used to say that they did not know what to do on Sunday nights, when on account of unavoidable absence of the pastor these regular services had to be omitted.



PRINTER'S INK

“Noli timere, sed loquere, et ne taceas.” (Acta Apost., xviii, 9.)

SOMEONE has said that if St. Paul lived in these days he would be editing a Catholic paper. We doubt if the Great Apostle of the Gentiles would find time for such confining work, but we feel assured the great preacher would be the sincere friend and patron of the Catholic Press; furthermore, he would welcome the opportunity to have his Epistles printed by the thousands and sent to the faithful in all parts of the world. Indeed, his Epistles to the Corinthians, the Philippians, the Colossians, the Galatians, and to the Romans are the forerunners of the Catholic periodicals of to-day.

It is difficult to measure the good that is being done by the written word. The writings of the prophets of old; the Gospels and Epistles written by the disciples of Christ; the precious gems of divine knowledge written by the early Fathers; all the books of Christian wisdom down to the present production of a most enterprising printery, are as one long and continuous sermon to the world, a sermon the more effective, as the spoken word fades with the sound of the voice, while the sermon that is printed we may re-read according to our desire and needs. “Let not the book of this law depart from thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate on it day and night, that thou

mayest observe and do all things that are written in it; then shalt thou direct thy way, and understand it.”¹

There are two ways by which a priest may perform a missionary work in the way of fostering Catholic literature: one, is to spread good books and periodicals; the other, is to write in defense of the Faith, or for the explanation of Catholic faith and practices.

That priest has a poor congregation whose people are not in possession of good Catholic books, nor subscribers to Catholic publications. One can almost discern the absence of the Catholic atmosphere on entering certain houses. There is evident therein a lack of spirituality, a want of knowledge of religious matters, a vague emptiness. We miss the link of mutual understanding. But when you find a Catholic book or paper in a house, a hope that all goes well there is bred within you. You realize that a Catholic messenger comes regularly to that house, delivering to the dwellers there a more or less interesting sermon. You will find that the readers of the Catholic papers are better Christians, better informed about their religion, consequently, better equipped intellectually to take part in a controversy with the enemies of their faith. Many of these papers find their way into Protestant homes, and some truth about us is thus learned. The people of to-day are a reading people, and the press is the most potent teacher of the masses.

“For the past three centuries the press has occupied much of the ground that once belonged exclusively to oral instruction; and with vast multitudes it has become the

¹ Josue, I. 8.

chief, if not the sole teacher. Like a never failing fountain, it sends forth its publications in every possible variety of form, as numerous as the dew drops from the womb of morning." "Articles and reviews are projected onward to the ends of the earth at the rate of hundreds of miles a day. Our seats are strewn, our pavements are powdered, and the very bricks of our city walls preach wisdom."¹

In other words, the press rules the mind of man, forms public opinion, and public opinion dominates the world. If we acknowledge the power of the press, and it is hard to see how we can deny it, we must guide the press as much as possible into a channel that leads to truth. "You must, therefore, and with the Catholic host, make strenuous use of the favorable time for action which is now at your disposal, by spreading abroad as far as possible the light of truth against the errors and absurd phantasies of the sects that are springing up."²

In a later chapter we shall deal especially with the distribution of Catholic literature; we shall, therefore confine our remarks here to the subject of your own writings. You are shaking your head sadly; "I cannot write for publication," you sigh. But why not? The scribe that edits your local paper did not have one-third of the literary education you enjoyed, yet he publishes his *Weekly* without fear or apology. You may not be able to write elegantly, but surely you can write correctly, and what is more, you can make yourself clear. A writer in an

¹ Newman: University Lectures.

² Letter of Pope Leo XIII to Cardinal Gibbons, April 1902.

old copy of the Ecclesiastical Review,¹ in an article on Catholizing Modern Sociology, says: "The zeal of the faithful, clergy and laity, is to be shown by readiness in taking upon themselves not the sword, but the weapons of the voice and pen." Lest you say these are merely the utterances of some professor, or dreaming theorist, let us add the words of a most zealous missionary, an eminently practical saver of souls, the saintly Père Marie Antoine:

"Ma bouche se taisant, ma plume est une épée,
Bien rapide toujours et toujours aiguisée."

Just as this missionary was not satisfied simply to preach the Gospel by word, but did so also by pen, so we must realize our duty to spread the truth in every way possible; for "Be ye steadfast and unmovable, always abounding in the works of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."² "The license that is commonly confounded with liberty; the passion for saying and reviling everything; the habit of thinking and expressing everything in print, have cast such deep shadows upon men's minds that there is now greater utility and necessity for this office of teaching than ever before, lest men should be drawn away from conscience and duty."³

"Since the thirst for reading and knowledge is so strong and widespread amongst you, and since according to circumstances it can be productive either of good or evil, every effort should be made to increase the number

¹ Vol. xlviii, 1.

² I Cor., xv, 58.

³ Testem Benevol.

of intelligent and well-disposed writers who take religion for their guide and virtue for their constant companion. And this seems all the more necessary in America on account of the familiar intercourse and intimacy between Catholics and those who are estranged from the Catholic name, a condition of things which certainly exacts from our people great circumspection and more than ordinary firmness.”¹

Let not the mission priest be deluded by the thought that only scholarly essays or theological dissertations are worthy subjects for a priest's pen. The Gospels contain more simple facts and narratives about the activities of our Saviour than dissertations on the Divinity of Christ, or the various aspects of salvation by faith and works. But they do not lose thereby one iota of their importance; on the contrary, they gain in interest and importance by the very simplicity of their statements. Let the priest, then, become first of all a raconteur of simple happenings within the fold. Let him describe the Church functions of his parish, the condition of his missions, the workings of Divine Grace in the heart of some recent convert, the result of the late mission, and offer that to the Press. Or let him tell the people at large of the growth of the kingdom of God in his district, evidenced by the dedication of new churches, or schools. Articles of this class will help the paper more than if you preached a powerful sermon on the apostolate of the Catholic Press.

The people like to see things in print, things they are familiar with. The main objection priests have against

¹ Longinque Oceani.

this kind of writing is that it savors of self-praise. As if it were the main object of Catholic papers to praise the activities of priests! This notion is as wrong as its practice is injurious to the standing of the Catholic Press. It would indeed be much better if the papers did not contain so many encomiums of popular ecclesiastics. A kind word on the occasion of a silver, or a golden jubilee, and an appreciative but discreet necrology at death, ought to be enough for the most ambitious of the clergy. Let us leave our biography to posterity, for "in due time we shall reap, not failing."¹ You need not tell your readers that you preached a brilliant sermon; better give a sketch of what you said, and let them judge for themselves of its brilliancy. Or if you describe the founding of a new mission, the building of a new church or school, you need not tell the public that it is due to the untiring zeal of the pastor. Rather let it be known that the pastor had very loyal and zealous helpers. The readers know that the lion's share of credit goes to the leader. As to casual remarks that might tend to hurt your feelings, remember that caustic criticism would be far more serious if it were said that nothing good was ever reported from your field of labor. If we must be objects of criticism, it is better to be censured for doing good, than for lack of good works.

However, the Catholic Press is not the only kind to be considered; the Local Press, too, must be closely watched and made use of in a manner that will help to gain the ear of the non-Catholic. In "The Ambassador of Christ,"

¹ Gal., vi, 9.

Cardinal Gibbons says: "There are times when the pastor will avail himself of the secular press to address that large audience that cannot be reached by other means. The Press is the great vehicle of public thought in our day. It is a colossal engine of truth and error. It is like the field mentioned in the Gospel, in which good seed and cockle are sowed. It is a net that gathers in good fish and bad. We cannot ignore the Press. We are daily confronted by it. It penetrates every walk of life, and its influence and circulation are daily increasing. Even on religious questions, it is regarded by many as an oracle, and it goes far toward molding the opinions and forming the judgment of millions that have but vague ideas of Christianity."

If we are given scant, or faulty mention in the secular press, we cannot always lay the blame to the bigotry of non-Catholic editors. Let the priest be always ready to furnish correct copy, then our complaints of misrepresentation will cease. Look at the dailypaper on Mondays and Saturdays; nearly all the denominational churches, Christian Science, and Free Thought, have announcements, not only as to the time and character of the services, but likewise announcing in advance the subject of the discourse together with the name of the preacher; later, there is given a succinct outline of the doctrines enunciated. Even the local papers have the announcements of the Protestant clergy with theme and program of musical numbers, followed by the personal invitation of the minister to "come and worship" in his church. Rarely do we find any announcement of services in

Catholic churches even in city papers. An announcement of this kind, however, would not only be helpful to Catholics, especially to travellers, but it might be the occasion of many a non-Catholic's having his attention attracted to our church, whereas, otherwise he would never think of going inside a Catholic Church.

Probably the reader is familiar with the syndicated column conducted by a famous Protestant ecclesiastic in a large number of our national dailies. He answers questions of religious, as well as those of political, economic, and social import. We must admit that while as Catholics we cannot at all times agree with him in his dogmatic explanations, that nevertheless, his fair and sane elucidations on moral and social questions are no doubt prolific of much good, for millions throughout the country read his answers. What a power for good this apostle of Printers' ink wields! A preacher and father confessor to vast numbers who otherwise would probably never approach a clergyman for advice. How, if such a column should be conducted by a Catholic theologian whose name is known over the land and whose fame would insure not only the financial success of the syndicate that would manage the sale of the column, but also the intrinsic success of the undertaking by creating a general and deep interest in the doctrines thus broadcast among the people! What a power for good!

Every missionary priest can be a Dr. Cadman on a small scale. If he prepares prudent and not too lengthy articles for the local weekly, or the daily paper, describing or explaining certain festivals or celebrations: First

Holy Communion, Confirmation, the ceremonies of Blessing a new church, or a bell; Forty Hours devotion, or Corpus Christi processions; or if he protests in a dignified manner against some outrage to morality and religion, he will, as a rule, find the editor most willing to give him space in the paper. Of course, the editor will do the same for other ministers in town, and he will probably add a personal note of approval to their sketch of last Sunday's sermon. That is no reason, however, why we should not get a hearing through the same columns. The Disciples said to Jesus: "We saw a certain man casting out devils in Thy name, and we forbade him, because he followeth not with us. And Jesus said: 'Forbid him not; for he that is not against you is for you.'"¹

¹ Luke, ix, 49, 50.

-- XI --

DISTRIBUTION OF CATHOLIC LITERATURE

"Do not think that I came to send peace upon earth; I came not to send peace, but the sword." (Matt., x, 34.)

IN this age of general progress and increasing enlightenment, when the number of illiterates is steadily decreasing, what is more natural than the imparting of knowledge of all kinds by the printed word as well as by word of mouth? The Catholic Church never lags behind. There is no dearth of books, pamphlets and periodicals that set forth in the most convincing and illuminating manner the doctrines and practices of our holy religion. We have publications for every class of people, for the educated, as well as for those in the humbler walks of life.

A mission priest will find it not only convenient, but even necessary to keep always at hand a supply of good Catholic literature. Very often his own people ask for something to give an interested Protestant neighbor for reading. Or some caller while waiting in the parlor seeing Catholic reading matter on the table, will take it up for inspection. When the priest surprises the caller so engaged, he will say that the pamphlet is interesting; this gives the priest the opportunity not only to present a copy, but offer other reading matter, if desired. When a Catholic man comes to make arrangements for a marriage with a Protestant girl, let us be sure to give him

some reading matter for the lady. If the child of a mixed marriage is brought for baptism, let us give the parents a souvenir in the form of a pamphlet describing the necessity, importance, effects, and ceremonies of the Sacrament of Regeneration.

The author has known more than one priest who had the custom of taking some reading matter with them wherever they went. Sometimes they would leave a copy on the street car, or drop some pamphlet in the seat of the railroad coach, as they left the train; or they would leave a copy or two on the desk in the post office, or bank. If they saw a man sitting idly by the wayside they would slip him one "to pass the time." In season, and out of season, they were always about their Master's business.

We can learn much from the travelling salesman. How untiring are his efforts to laud his firm, to sing the praises of his wares! He will not hesitate to affix stickers to your very church doors, telling the faithful that a particular brand of chewing gum, cold drink, or breakfast food is the best of its kind on the market. Why should we be so reticent about the "House" we represent? Do we not "handle" a much superior article?

St. Denis the Areopagite tells us, "*Omnium divinorum divinissimum esse, Dei cooperatorem fieri.*" We become God's coöperators by spreading the word of God. Not only by speech, but also by writing. This form of missionary work is also the easiest way of spreading the Gospel. There is always an audience for this kind of preaching. Dr. Brownson thinks that "The Church to be loved, needs but be seen as She is; the truth to be

believed needs but be presented to the mind as it is in its real relations." If this be true, and if the dissenters of our own town remain ignorant of the beauty of the Church, it must be our own fault to a great extent. Do we plan and design constantly, with prayer and study, how to advance the kingdom of God? There are occasions when to fail doing so would be grave neglect of your pastoral duties, high treason against Him whose minister you are. You are the ambassador of Christ, and as such, you must take up the cause of your Master whenever there is danger of His being attacked. Satan is ever at work battling against the truth, and your own town is no exception to the rule. It is for the most part in the small town, particularly the town without a resident priest, where the defamer of the Church runs riot. No doubt, the slimy trail of the serpent has not escaped your observation; you have perceived certain evil elements at work. In your town, as elsewhere, and in your neighboring missions, there are to be found the common misconceptions about us: the fables of having to pay to have our sins forgiven; buying the souls out of Purgatory; adoration of the Blessed Virgin; the prohibition to read the Bible, and others. But these erroneous traditions are harmless compared to the nefarious activity of certain anti-Catholic books and papers. These keep the people whom you see daily and with many of whom you have frequent and friendly intercourse — well informed about the secrets of the confessional, the lives of escaped nuns, the relations of the priests with women members of the congregation, the mysteries of convent life, etc. Probably

some "pious" soul is the agent for the ubiquitous "Menace," and thinks she is doing a service to the Lord in helping to expose the Scarlet Woman. There is always, too, the possibility of an ex-priest lecturer's promising to unmask Rome and her satellites and to exhibit to his audience the skeleton of Popery in all its hideous nakedness. Will you stand idly by, and with a contemptuous shrug, say: "Such men and such means cannot hurt the Church of God?" True; but they do hurt her reputation among the ignorant masses.

Fortunately, the anti-Catholic lecturer is usually overtaken by his nemesis before he gets away. His morality, as a rule, is the lowest possible, and often denunciations follow him from previous fields of action. Not infrequently, he falls into the hands of the Law for fraud, or white slavery. At such times, public feeling naturally turns against him and against those who brought him to town.

It is different, however, with the anti-Catholic books. Secretly they make their way from house to house, and wherever they enter they leave their poisonous slime. It is inconceivable to what lengths a writer may go in his slander, and still be believed by the guileless. "Our enlightened community has a remarkable facility in disbelieving against reason, and in believing without reason. It will believe anything against Catholicity on the bare assertion of an individual, whose oath, in a case involving property to the amount of five dollars, it will not take."¹ Books and papers of this nature contain

¹ Dr. Brownson.

sufficient lewd suggestions to make them piquant reading. Nevertheless, men and women of church affiliations, who boast they never read a novel, who loudly condemn dances, movies, Sunday baseball, seem to think they do a virtuous act in reading such matter and circulating it among their friends.

It is the evident duty of the priest to counteract this prevalent evil. Use a sword against a sword; fight a gun with a gun, and a book with a book. "The American Constitution protects our religion from open persecution, but it does not, it cannot, protect us from liars and slanderers."¹ If they use the printed word to paint us as knaves and idolaters, let us use the printed word to prove them wrong, and to show them the truth and the beauty of our religion. If you can ascertain the names of the agents for the anti-Catholic Press and the names of their victims, mail them at once the antidote in the form of a Catholic paper, magazine, or pamphlet. The author knows of a Catholic priest who has the reputation of being one of the greatest convert-makers in the country; he sees to it that every Protestant minister in town gets enough Catholic literature to keep himself informed about our faith and morals, and to make it impossible for him to preach against the Catholic Church, unless indeed, such a one would wish to do so against his better knowledge.

Another priest of a south-western State edified the writer by a strange and novel request. It seems that in this priest's town a certain league of religious workers

¹ Questions of the Hour, by J. F. Conway.

held a convention; it transpired later that some old slanders against the Church were repeated in the course of the open meetings. Fortunately, the local papers printed the names and addresses of the 325 delegates. The priest sent me the list with a request to mail each person a copy of my pamphlet "Facts and Reasons." I have received similar orders from other parts of the United States. In a small town of northern Alabama some Catholic laymen formed a Catholic Defense League, and sent an order for 1700 copies of the same pamphlet. I have no doubt that they ordered many other pieces of Catholic literature for their laudable purpose. Of course much of this literature is thrown away on an ignorant class of readers, but some of it will produce its share of good. The author read of a convert who found the Truth by means of a scrap of paper which had served to wrap some merchandise. As an additional proof that I am not threshing out empty theories, here is a letter which I received from a man living in Georgia, several years ago:

"Rev. and dear Sir:

Pardon the liberty I take in writing to you. First, let me state, I am a Protestant, (a Baptist) reared in a community wholly Protestant and hostile to Catholicity. I know nothing of what the Church teaches, only what I have read in anti-Catholic papers, Menace, Watson's Magazine, etc., but like so many others, I am sure they overdraw the picture. Someone sent me by mail the other day a Catholic paper; it has started me thinking. I saw your name and address, so I thought I would write

to you. Many points in Catholic teaching I cannot make clear; here are a few questions. Baptism by pouring? Convents, are they what they say and for what use? Confession and Indulgences? Real Presence? Loyalty of Catholics to the United States? Do not think me prejudiced, I am not; perhaps, after all, the Catholic Church is true. I want to save my soul. I want to be in Christ's own Church whichever that is. It is reasonable to think one Religion only can be true. Now I am going to ask you to send me a few books or pamphlets on the teachings of the Church and what Catholics believe.

Yours sincerely,

C. J. F——

P.S. There are no Catholics here for miles and I never saw a Catholic church or priest in my life."

Does this letter not sound like a voice from the wilderness asking for a guide to find a way out of darkness, doubt, and ignorance? At another time, the author received a letter from a young man, probably connected with school work, asking for books on Catholicity to be placed in the local library. Not a few local libraries in small towns have a set of the Catholic Encyclopedia, presented by Catholic benefactors, or Catholic fraternal associations. This work may not receive the appreciation it deserves, but there are times when it is worth its weight in gold, as it serves as a beacon during the troubled times of bigoted hysteria, which breaks out at intervals in every section of the country.

As a rule, Protestants want to know something definite

about our religion; we should place the information within their reach, but without ostentation, otherwise, they will suspect that they are being "lured," and will feel that freedom of choice is being taken from them. The fruits of such a course are not seen at once; but the good seed once sown, the taking of root is but a question of time. A convert wrote in *The Missionary*, (1911): "I will lay it down, as a general proposition, that if you get an intelligent Protestant to read 'The Faith of Our Fathers,' 'Catholic Belief,' by Bruno, and 'Plain Facts for Fair Minds,' by Searle, if you don't make a Catholic of him at once, you will at least spoil him for being a Protestant, and that is a step (and an important one) towards Catholicism."

It would not be right to close this chapter without saying a word about the Book Rack and the Sunday Visitor Club. These are perhaps the two most convenient and useful factors for spreading the truth of Catholicity among the masses. Although, apparently accessible only to Catholics, yet a considerable percentage of the booklets taken from the Rack, as well as thousands of copies of the Sunday Visitor, make their way ultimately into Protestant homes. They perform a dual task: they instruct the Catholics themselves on practical religious matters, and they afford them an easy and inexpensive means of doing a little missionary work of their own. There is scarcely a Catholic in our isolated missions but has some friend or relative whose conversion is a subject of grave concern to him. Our Catholic layman understands the mind of the Protestant better than we do,

since he is in closer contact with him. He therefore knows what kind of reading will be most appreciated, and just what type of information is most desired. He will see, then, that the pamphlet, or the old copy of the Sunday Visitor falls into the right hands. We must not, however, think that the book rack will take care of itself; we must watch it closely, and provide the matter that is most in demand. The priest might secure samples from the dealers and try them out. He must not depend too much upon his own taste, but study the taste of the reading public. Let him order enough Sunday Visitors to satisfy the demand. Should there be some copies left, he will know to whom he can mail them to advantage during the week; they will not be wasted.

In all things, in all walks of our priestly life, let us always remember the golden words of St. Chrysostom: "Nihil ita gratum Deo, nihil ita curae ut animarum salus." ¹

¹ Hom., 3, in Gent.

-- XII --

LETTER WRITING

"Dearly beloved, taking all care to write unto you concerning your common salvation, I was under a necessity to write unto you: to beseech you to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints."

(Jude, i, 3.)

WE can speculate only as to what St. Paul would do in regard to Catholic journalism, were he living in modern times; but there is no room for speculation on his attitude toward letter writing, for we have his wonderful collection on doctrine, tradition, and exhortation given through his Epistles to the faithful converted by him. There are others among the Apostles who made use of the letter also in their apostolic work, but St. Paul, who could say that he had travelled and had suffered more than the rest of the disciples, is the master in the field of Apostolic Letters. St. Paul, too, had received the commission to preach the Gospel, and this sacred office required constant wanderings from place to place; as he could not remain long in any one place, and on his brief stays could not sufficiently instruct his neophytes in the faith, he sought to continue his instructions by the written message, as likewise did St. Peter, St. John, St. James, and St. Jude.

St. Paul was keenly aware of the dangers that awaited the newly converted. "I know that after my departure, ravening wolves will enter among you, not sparing the flock."¹ Hence, he wished to stay with them in spirit.

¹ Acts, xx, 29.

To remind them of his solicitude, he wrote to them occasionally to let them know that he ceased "not to give thanks for you, making commemoration of you in my prayers."¹ Letter writing at the time of the Apostles was not so simple a matter as it is to-day. There were no mail trains, no express, no steamer line, no international postal union with its two cent rate, to say nothing of the air mail. It must have been an expensive matter to keep in touch with his converts and his co-Apostles throughout the world, and long delays must have been inevitable. Yet, St. Paul found time and the means to carry on this branch of the missionary apostolate. And what a correspondent he was! What a master of style and of composition! How sublime the truths and how urgent the warnings that flowed from his pen. There are no shallow phrases, no small gossip, no diatribes. Every word spells fervor and zeal. The desire to teach and to help and to save, permeates every sentence. "The Epistles of St. Paul," says St. Chrysostom, "are like mines and fountains: mines, because they produce the purest gold in abundance; and fountains, that will never dry up, but flow the more abundantly the more we draw from them."

In the course of our missionary life, we have many opportunities to imitate the Apostle of the Gentiles in this activity. In the country districts, many priests have to attend to other missions than the parish where they reside; some of these missions are miles distant; some he may visit at intervals of once a month; while

¹ Ephes., i, 16.

in other cases, Catholics live so far away that the best he can do for them is to visit them once or twice a year. What will become of these neglected children of the Church? They receive no regular instruction, hear no sermons, attend no Mass, receive Holy Communion but once a year. No wonder that they almost forget they are Catholics, since not only the feast days and the fast days, but even the seasons of the ecclesiastical year pass by unnoted! Now in just such circumstances the priest will find the opportunity to exercise the apostolate of letter writing. If he should write to these Catholics so far removed from the centre of his field, an occasional letter reminding them of the beginning of Advent or Lent, or of the approach of All Saints and All Souls Day, it will do much to strengthen them in the faith. Send them a letter of good wishes for Christmas and for Easter; write them a letter of consolation in sickness and other trials. Send them papers and pamphlets from the book rack, Catholic papers and magazines from your own personal supply. Let them know and feel that their pastor is thinking of them, watching over them from afar. It will give them the consoling conviction that they still belong to the Mother Church. How such letters are appreciated! "Quam cum legissent, gavisī sunt super consolatione."¹

Such letters need not be long letters; always be sure you say something definite and to the point. Let your letters be addressed to the head of the house; they will always be welcome; nor will they then be subject to any mistaken view of the writer's motives. Unless there be a

¹ Acta Apost., xv, 31.

special reason for writing personally to the young daughter of the house, in the interest of her soul's good, do not write to her.

Another auspicious occasion for the missionary's letter occurs when we wish to convey some message, be it warning or instruction, a thing that is both delicate and difficult. Some of your black sheep are hard to reach; they avoid you, either because of a bad conscience, or because of some grievance, real or imaginary. If we ourselves are somewhat high-strung, it may be better not to force an oral explanation; but a kindly letter, indited by true charity and priestly zeal, carefully composed and wisely worded, is able to find the way to the heart of our wayward child.

But I wish to speak especially on what we can do for our Protestant subjects. "I am not ashamed of the Gospel. For it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth, to the Jew first, and to the Greek."¹ Letter writing may be employed to great advantage in our dealings with non-Catholics. Sometimes we hear of a certain minister who is attacking "Rome." We can write him a courteous letter asking him to desist from causing strife and spreading bigotry. If we know the exact untruth he has uttered, we can give him the correct matter, together with any scriptural or historical proof available. This will either cause him to correct his error, or at least, he will be more careful about his utterances in the future. So, too, should there be an open attack or a slanderous misstatement on Catholicity

¹ Rom., i, 16.

in the local or regional press, a firm and dignified letter of protest, addressed either to the editor or the owner of the paper, will usually have a salutary effect. Recently a Catholic magazine published an article on bigoted editors; the author advised the readers not to write letters of protest to the editor, but to the advertising manager. This course, so he says, will bring quicker and surer results. This may be true, but it seems to suggest violence or boycott; neither of which are proof. I would therefore say, write first to the editor, or to the person responsible for the wrong, and give him the opportunity to correct his erroneous statement; if this fails, let some prominent layman, not the priest himself, write to the business manager of the offending paper, mentioning the loss of patronage in case of further offense.

You notice from time to time that certain Protestants are attending your services quite regularly. They appear to be well impressed by what they see and hear, but it is evident they are avoiding you, either through timidity, or because they fear to be observed by their co-religionists. This latter reason forbids you to call at their home, as it might embarrass them. This is again an occasion for a cordial letter of encouragement to facilitate the entering the Church. Meet these people half way; offer them personal instruction, or at least offer them literature that will be a source of information on the holy Church. In many a case, they will gladly stretch forth the hand to receive it.

Through social intercourse, travel, or business relations, a priest often comes into contact with upright and intel-

lectual non-Catholics whose character appeals to him and gives him promise of conversion if the Truth be placed in the right light before them. Certainly, the priest cannot ask offhand that they place themselves under instruction; at the same time, he will try to keep in touch with them. A friendly correspondence carried on with kindred souls may gradually, perhaps after many years, bring the gift of faith to the non-Catholic. Such opportunities to exert an enduring influence upon the religious susceptibilities of cultured minds, are often the gift of former ministers who have become Catholics, and who have gone farther by becoming priests themselves. Father Faber, Cardinal Newman, and the Monsignori Benson and Bickerstaff-Drew are said to have carried on a most blessed apostolate among the very scions of Anglicanism, and with the most happy results. Other priests, born and reared in the Faith, have wielded a powerful pen. Alban Stolz, the famous apologist of Fribourg in Baden, left two large volumes of delightful letters that are not only good literature, but form an excellent model of what the letters of a priest should be when addressed to lay persons. His letters to Julie Reineke, daughter of a Lutheran minister, and likewise wife of a Lutheran minister, were published under the title "Providence and Guidance" — *Fuegung und Fuehrung* — ; they would be an excellent guide in the instruction of a convert, when the instructions are carried on by correspondence. These letters effected their purpose, for Julie Reineke became a Catholic.

Father Heuser in the "Life of Monsignor Sheehan" gives us several excellent examples of how the author of "Luke

Delmage" corresponded with men of other faith. His letters to Justice Holmes, for instance, are masterpieces of tact and religious zeal combined. We select a passage from a letter penned to the Justice in 1910.

"Would you be surprised to hear that in what you say about 'intellect' you come very near the dogmatic teaching of the Church, especially as revealed in the late Papal Encyclical against 'Modernism'? . . . The Church takes its stand upon reason as the solid foundation on which Faith rests. Hence its approval of the Thomistic philosophy, which rests entirely on the syllogism, a view accepted also by John Stuart Mills. But as you say, intellect has its limitations, which we are all painfully conscious of; and therefore, if we are to reach Truth, there must be some other avenue. This we call Faith. . . ."

Note how politely he begins by finding a common point of agreement, by showing his Protestant correspondent that his views are really based on Catholic belief; then he goes forth to show him what constitutes the necessity of Faith. In another letter addressed to the poet S. R. Lysaght, he begins by thanking him for the pleasure derived from the poet's latest volume of verses; then he proceeds to give him an indirect reproof for the agnostic spirit displayed in them. "You won't think me impertinent," he ventures, "if I say that the less agnostic your future volume is, the greater chance has it of success with the public. Swinburne owes his failure in catching the 'aura' of popularity to his earlier poems, although he partially repudiated them and almost apologized for

them; and Tennyson owed a great deal of his success to the fact that he gave a doubting and anxious world some little substitute for lost faiths. The world can never do without Religion. In art, literature, even in the sciences, it is always predominant."

We revert again to the example of the famous French Capuchin Antoine who felt it his personal obligation to reconcile all to God, and when he could not reach the object of his zeal by word of mouth, he penned the most affectionate and urgent letters to them, beseeching them for the love of God to accept the Truth offered by the Catholic Church. To the wife of President Carnot, as to the wife of President Faure and that of President Loubet, he wrote asking them to use their influence on their husbands that they do justice to the religious question of the day. To the Premiers Briand and Combes he wrote threatening them with God's punishment for persecuting His Holy Church in the country that had always been proud of the title "Most Christian." To the Tsar Nicolas, to King Edward, and to Emperor William he wrote asking them directly to return to the Mother Church, thus to save their own souls, and to return to their subjects that priceless boon of Faith which their forbears had taken from them through schism and the Reformation. It may be argued that such letters did no good. Who knows? The sermon preached by John the Baptist before Herod did not seem to do much good either, but evidently it made that cruel king think. Now if that alone is achieved, the making of some one in the wrong "think," certainly our pains have met with reward. Our first duty

is to be apostles; we have taken the first step toward making converts, when we make the erring think.

Our correspondence with absent parishioners or prospective converts can easily be turned into a regular course of instruction. A few years ago, the writer called on a young brother-priest, living in an isolated country parish, and was greatly edified to learn from his host that he conducted regular correspondence courses on Catholic Doctrine with fifteen families of his district, five of the number not being Catholics. He had ordered a set of printed instructions and mailed out the different instructions, or lessons, once a week. A questionnaire was enclosed to be filled out and returned after the lesson was studied; the printed lesson was to remain in the possession of the pupil for future reference and for recapitulation. This zealous priest declared the course was most satisfactory on both sides. There is no doubt that such work is good missionary work, if carried on with patience and perseverance.

The question of Mixed Marriage is always an anxiety in the pastorate of the mission priest. It is an evil, but one that cannot be removed. As long as Catholics live in small towns, or in the country among a large Protestant population, Mixed Marriage will be of more or less frequency. All we can do is to make use of wise precautions. Letter writing may help in some cases. A young man keeps company with a young lady of some standing in her church. You have a well-founded fear that her family will try to inveigle him into a Protestant church wedding, or at least, as a compromise, into a marriage before a

magistrate. Having gained that much, they can hope to "convert" this weak Catholic. Here is your opportunity to write an apostolic letter to this young man, envisaged by danger that he cannot see; warn him as a loving father, "*obsecra, increpa, in omni patientia et doctrina.*" A letter may do more good than a personal interview. He cannot talk back to a letter, nor can he withdraw in anger. He will not feel so abashed, and can read the letter over again and again, until he has absorbed its whole meaning, and has let it sink into his conscience.

Or again: a young girl comes to you and tells you she is going to marry a Protestant who is very nice about her religion; he will let her do as she pleases, but he will not sign any agreement, as he considers that a matter opposed to his sense of honor and against his manhood. Instead of giving your message to the young lady to be conveyed to this man, it will be better if you write to him explaining the law of the Church and giving the reasons for that law; invite him to call on you to talk things over. Or you hear of a man who has signed his agreement, but now refuses to allow the first child to be baptized in the Catholic Faith. Write him a serious letter, and point out to him his duty as a gentleman, and as a man of his word. You might also show him the absurdity of his opposition to the christening of the child, when after all it is the mother who will raise this child and instill into him the seed of religion.

Yes, as in the days of St. Paul, so to-day: writing letters can be employed most effectively for the conversion and the saving of souls; for "to the Greeks and

to the barbarians, to the wise and to the unwise, I am a debtor.”¹ “For our glory is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in the simplicity of heart, and sincerity of God, and not in carnal wisdom, but in the grace of God, we have conversed in this world.”²

¹ Rom., i, 14.

² II Cor. i, 12.

-- XIII --

MISSION SCHOOLS

"Rarely we lose the first impressions which we received in our youth."
(St. Jerome: *Ad Laetam.*)

WHEN we make suggestions as to how to reach the "other sheep," we must not overlook one very important factor, namely, the Mission School. Pope Leo XIII in his Encyclical "*Testem Benevolentiae*" made it clear that in our work of evangelization we are not to despise the instruments of God's grace employed by great men and women who brought the light of Faith to our forefathers. If the Order of St. Benedict, and later Religious Orders, especially the sons of St. Ignatius, achieved such wonderful results, it was not only by their preaching, their piety, their nobility of mind and soul that they made Europe Christian; no; the real and permanent conversion was brought about by means of Christian schools.

We may regard the early catechumens' class, which corresponds with our convert class, as the beginning of the Mission School. In the middle of the second century, we find mention of regular catechetical schools conducted for the benefit of those who had to attend pagan schools to acquire the knowledge of rhetoric and of the sciences. It soon became customary to have so-called cathedral schools; these developed from the ordinary convert classes into regular seminaries for the education of

clerics. These spasmodic attempts at Christian education finally grew into a widespread system under St. Benedict who gave an organized monasticism to the Western Church, together with a regular plan of education. Thus trained at home, the sons of St. Benedict went forth to Gaul, Germany, Britain, Slavonia, etc., to convert nations to the Gospel. Wherever they settled, they began by plying the trades they had learned in the monastery; they became builders, artisans, husbandmen, hunters, fishermen; they raised livestock, and grafted sweet bearing branches upon the trees of the wilderness; and bringing into play new methods and superior skill, they attracted the attention of the natives who were then willing enough to entrust to them their own children for instruction. These children were taught to read and write.

The monks had brought their libraries with them from the monastery: Cicero, Livius, Caesar, Horace, and Vergil; all masters of classic lore. But the wise and zealous teachers took special care to introduce to their ambitious disciples the sweetness of the Bible, and the grandeur of the Fathers. With what sentiments must not those young people have listened when they heard for the first time the story of the Creation, of Adam and Eve, and the first sin; of paradise lost, and the promise that it could be regained; of the coming of the Redeemer, and of the Sacrifice on Calvary. The story of Wodan and Freya had never been imparted to them in such thrilling and graphic details. They absorbed Christianity with their Latin grammar, and thus became so

deeply imbued with Truth, that they not only persevered in their faith, but became apostles to their kith and kin. This method of approach was pursued throughout centuries with unfailing success, and was passed on to the different Orders as they came into existence. In the hands of the Jesuits, the method became the vehicle of extraordinary success in all parts of the world. As one example: St. Peter Canisius saved a large part of Germany for the Catholic Faith by founding schools, writing catechisms, and other works of edification, instruction, and controversy; he became the teacher and adviser of thousands.

The history of the Reductions of Paraguay shows us the almost miraculous effectiveness of the Mission School among the pagan Indians. The fact that whole tribes returned to paganism when the Jesuits were driven out and their schools closed and abandoned, is a further proof of the importance of mission schools in converting unbelievers. The theory of educating the little ones to gain through them the adults, was reversed by the Jesuits in China. Here they began by teaching higher mathematics and astronomy to the higher ranks of the population, thereby gaining the good will of the rulers, and then the permission to preach the Gospel.

The missionaries of to-day are still following the old custom: Christianization and civilization by way of the school. Wherever they arrive to preach the Gospel, they look at once for a site on which to erect a school, for it is upon the youth of a country they base their hope of a blessed apostolate. The American Missionary among

the Negroes and Indians has adopted the same system. Wherever they conduct such mission schools, they receive pupils irrespective of religious beliefs; according to the latest reports from Mission Headquarters, the schools are crowded with non-Catholic children. They are trained in Catholic doctrine and practice with the hope that ultimately they may be drawn to the bosom of the all-embracing Mother.

But we are not doing our best to expand the mission school idea. If we have special collections and societies to provide for the schools having not "de facto," but prospective Catholic Indians and Negroes, why should we not, as far as possible do the same for the numberless white Protestant and the half pagan? In this country, where we possess perfect liberty to build not only our churches, but also our schools as we please, it is not to our credit that we are so inactive in the cause of the mission school. The writer has watched this class of work among the different denominations, and has seen instances of success that are almost phenomenal. Who has not heard of Berea, a school town on the outskirts of the Cumberland Mountains in Kentucky? There are about two thousand students enrolled there, young men and women, under sectarian tutelage and influence. The college has a hotel with student porters and clerks, cooks and waitresses. There is a hospital where students learn nursing and pharmacy; a bank with student tellers and bookkeepers; the office, library, museums, etc., are of course under the management of competent officers, but his staff of assistants is recruited from the student body.

Needless to say that all trades are taught, and that the kitchen, bakery, farm, and dairy are manned entirely by the students.

Within a radius of perhaps a hundred miles, we find a Presbyterian school at Mt. Vernon, Methodist schools in London and Barbourville, Episcopalian school in Corbin, Baptist Mission Seminary in Williamsburg, a Settlement School near Harlan, and Lincoln Memorial School in Harrigate, Tennessee, in charge of the Congregationalists. The denomination that has the school in each of the above named localities, has the largest church membership (excepting the Episcopalians), the most flourishing Sunday schools, and Bible classes, and their respective patrons wield the greatest influence over the community. This is but natural. Their schools are faithful and efficient allies of their churches.

O that we had a few Bereas and Harrigates! but alas! our endeavors in this direction are few and but poorly supported. In our regular parochial schools, Protestant children are scarcely welcome; rarely is any attempt made to secure their attendance. As a rule, however, they are welcome to our boarding schools, and in consequence we can count a considerable number of converts from their ranks. Sometimes they come over to us while attending school; if serious obstacles intervene while they are at school, they find their way back to us after they have attained the age of independence. With very few exceptions, Protestants who have attended Catholic boarding schools are a credit to their Alma Mater, and bear testimony to the excellence of the Cath-

olic religion both by their words and actions. It is strange that this quite obvious fact does not induce increased facilities for educating Protestant children with our own. In the case of the regular parochial schools that are free schools, we can readily see the economic side of the question, since the parishes are glad to be able to provide education for their own children; it might be difficult to prove to the paying members, the wisdom of maintaining a public school without patronizing it, to say nothing of the burden of educating Protestant children in their own schools at the same time. Add to this the fact that we founded our own school system for the purpose of segregating our children from non-Catholic companionship. There is no doubt that a large number of Protestant children in our schools would be fraught with disadvantages and dangers. These dangers are much greater in the higher grades, unless the Protestant pupil has gone through the lower grades also in a Catholic school. In boarding schools especially it is not advisable to have a large percentage of non-Catholic pupils. A well known Academy for Girls in the Middle West has set the number of Protestants for admission at twenty per cent. They have come to this conclusion after more than fifty years' experience. The Sisters tell us that one Protestant child among four Catholics will yield quickly to the influence of the latter, and will readily absorb their principles and ethics; while if the Protestant element should equal, or be larger than the Catholic, the exact contrary will happen and with the most regrettable results.

There are, however, many localities where the Catholics are not sufficiently numerous to have a school of their own; yet a school should be launched, and it would thrive on the help given by the non-Catholic population. Our school system commands the highest esteem from those outside the Fold, and it would be comparatively easy to enlist their support of the experiment. The writer has been asked more than once, when visiting some of his out-of-the-way missions, "How soon are you going to start a school here?" They seemed to take it for granted that a school building is one of our specialities! Why not live up to the reputation?

But you may say: "What is the use of having a Catholic school and taking in the Protestant children? I would not be allowed to proselytize, and probably could not receive them into the Church even if on their own account they wished to join, because of the opposition of the parents." You are perfectly right. We can use neither persuasion nor threats; neither confusing arguments, bribes, nor undue influence may be employed to turn our pupils against their home training. It is also the fact that sometimes we have to refuse their request to be received, in spite of their evident sincerity; but the good work goes on just the same. The main thing is that we instil into the hearts of the little ones Catholic principles, Catholic standards of morality, the Catholic sense of duty toward God, and that we teach them the need and beauty of prayer. Thus we show them who and what we are and engender in them a desire to be one with us. Unconsciously, they fall into good habits,

say regular prayers, visit the church in passing, learn to make sacrifices during Lent, recite the Rosary, and make the Stations. Children who in all sincerity practice such pious acts will in due time receive the grace of genuine conversion. Even while they remain "in partibus infidelium" they are walking agents for the Catholic Church, correcting errors and stifling prejudice by word and action.

If you say these good effects are more or less problematical, let me point out some immediate results which will repay you for the worries and sacrifices entailed by a school in a small town; these worries and sacrifices are borne both by the priest and the people. We know the difference in the parish with a school from that without a school! The situation may be compared to that in a family when the mother is gone. There is lack of order everywhere; a lack of love and of community spirit; mixed marriages abound, marriage without the presence of the priest is of common occurrence; apostacies to other denominations for social reasons happen now and then; church attendance is far from satisfactory. On the other hand, as soon as the Catholic school begins to function, you will note a marked change and improvement. You now have a bond of union to keep your flock together; the children will no longer attend the Protestant Sunday school; you are always sure of attendants at your daily Mass, and the Sunday congregation will soon double in size. There will be an increase in Holy Communions, and men and women who have not been at church for years will come back, bringing their children

to school; for they want their children to be better Catholics than they themselves have been. Their children will be well prepared for First Communion. This blessed day has brought back more careless Catholics than many missions and funerals. The school, too, will bring the Catholic children together and accustom them to Catholic companionship, with the final result that there will be more Catholic weddings than mixed marriages. Your lambs and sheep have better pasture for religious instruction, will be better versed in their Faith, and, consequently, will be able to explain their Faith when occasion demands. There is a further advantage in the mission school: it will increase your prestige in the community and will bring you into contact with a class of Protestants who have shown themselves to be above common prejudice, those whose children are in your Catholic school.

Perhaps you are in hearty agreement with me in all that I have said in favor of the mission schools, but you protest that in your case it is not feasible on account of the few Catholics and the scarcity of means. Certainly, this is a very serious handicap, but not necessarily fatal to the project. Some of the greatest religious enterprises have started without visible means of support: think of Don Bosco, founder of the Salesians; of Father Jansen, founder of the Society of the Divine Word; or to go farther back, read of St. Camillus de Lellis. These holy men possessed nothing but a loving heart and their trust in Divine Providence. "Where there's a will, there's a way," and the scantier the means at the beginning, the

more abundant the blessing of God in the end. The writer knows a priest who was on mission work some twenty-five years ago. The town had exactly twelve Catholic families, half of the number living in mixed marriage. He realized that he must have a school if he wished to do any good. A two days' canvass netted him a list of twenty-three prospective pupils, five of them Protestant, on condition that the Catholic school would be opened by the first of September. There was no school building, nor even a priest's residence, but the school opened on time. At first the lessons were given in the church, but within a few months an inexpensive structure was erected, costing about one thousand dollars. For six years a Catholic young lady taught this school; by the end of that time, its success was assured, so that three Sisters could be engaged; at present, this little mission school has expanded into an up-to-date academy with an attendance of nearly three hundred children, including about fifty boarders; almost eighty per cent of the day pupils are Protestant. This school is doing a most blessed work in dispensing Catholic culture and Catholic ethics to the most promising and talented young people of that town. God alone knows its full value as a saver of souls.

The writer has seen many other examples of mission schools carried on both by religious and by seculars. In either case, it was always a question rather of love of souls than of hope of material remuneration; the results have always been most satisfactory in a spiritual sense.

Years ago when I began work on some of the poorest missions in the country, I greeted with enthusiasm the

founding of Church Extension. Knowing the needs of the missions, I expected great things of this foundation, nor have my expectations been deceived. Churches were built, priests received the means of sustenance on the poorest missions, sacred vessels, statuary, vestments, organs, and other essentials for divine service went forth and brought happiness and courage to struggling missionaries. The Chapel Car and the Motor Chapel arrived, and sped through the United States, carrying the glory of our Holy Faith from one end of the country to the other: but I waited for something more; for years I had watched the crying need of this "something more." At last there rose a man at the First Missionary Congress held at Washington, D. C., who coined the phrase for the thing that had so long slumbered in my mind. Monsignor Pozzi of New York said to the Fathers in Congress, "We need not only a Catholic Church Extension, but we need also a Catholic School Extension." Of course this distinguished Monsignor had in mind the neglected children of Italian immigrants. My dreams were of a great society, even more powerful than Church Extension, and my imagination could even then hear the question: "How much do you need to operate a mission school in your district?" Alas! the question has never been asked. School Extension is still non-existent, and may not materialize for years to come. The only hope in this connection we have so far is the school for catechists near Huntington, Indiana; this school, however, is intended for the instruction of Mexicans. May we soon have a sufficient number of catechists for our own scattered

missions in the South and West, who will not only teach catechism, but conduct primary schools where a regular parochial school may yet be an impossibility.

In the meantime, we must do the best we can with what means we have at our disposal, derived from tuition fees, contributions, and subscriptions. As a rule, it is easier to interest generous friends in the cause of the mission school than in building churches. The idea of education, and the hope of wiping out illiteracy are growing more popular every day with men of wealth. But of course we must be prepared for rebuffs. A well-to-do man who had been recommended to me as very generous towards any good cause, answered my appeal: "I cannot send you anything. Besides, I think every parish ought to support its own school." Very truly spoken on the part of this writer. But his parish numbered six hundred families, and my mission church parish but fourteen! Yet, the school was more necessary for us than it was for that well regulated city parish. On the same ground, one might decline to contribute to the African Missions, or to the Chinese Missions, saying: "Let the Kaffirs and Chinese take care of their own churches." God has blessed us with the gift of faith, and we must be prepared to share with others the blessings we have received in abundance.

I think this country owes the Catholic Church a Catholic School Extension; there is no need to erect palaces of learning to vie with the public schools, but simple, correct, and sufficiently commodious structures to enable us to take care of the lowly, and to work for the souls

of children through these schools, of children who otherwise might be out of the reach of any school. May our hearts warm to the subject of the mission school; through their instrumentality we can foster Catholic thought and Catholic principles more promptly, formally, and enduringly than by any other missionary endeavor. It might be interesting to tabulate the conversions resulting from attendance of Protestant pupils in Catholic schools, colleges and academies. We could add to these convert-makers our Catholic hospitals and we shall not be far amiss when we claim that ninety per cent of all converts received into the Church, exclusive of marriage converts, come from Catholic educational and charitable institutions.

-- XIV --

PROTESTANTISM

"Protestantism in America is a conglomeration of more or less antagonistic sects, whose rivalry in country towns and villages is frequently intense, so keen is their desire to secure the greatest number of members, the most attractive preacher, or the best music."

(Rebuilding a Lost Faith. Stoddard.)

THE Protestant Church is well named. Ever since the Diet of Worms, 1524, when the dissentients protested against the clauses of tolerance, it has continued to protest against Rome. In its day, this protest has assumed the dimensions of bloody persecutions and wars; though modern culture disdains such violent weapons, yet the same spirit of hostile protestation leavens the minds of our separated brethren. We shall deal with that spirit under the caption of "Bigotry." For the present, let us look upon and study our old adversaries for a better valuation of their character; and let us do this as a means to assist us in our work among them, that our efforts may lead them to the possession of that truth of which they now possess but a fraction.

The number of Christian denominations is so large that it is not convenient to mention in this place all their conflicting theories and opinions. We must content ourselves to take up the main principles of Protestantism which are its norm, if we would comprehend the system. The prime rule of Protestant faith is the supremacy of

the Word; that means that the Bible is the supreme and sole rule of Faith, and that from it all divine revelations must be learned. Tradition it does not blindly trust. The reading of the Bible, then, is considered a most meritorious work; it assumes the place of prayer, worship, and divine service combined. The Protestant may not understand many things written therein; he believes, nevertheless, that the Spirit will give him an understanding of those truths of which he is in particular need. Protestantism teaches that Bible Reading works to spiritual benefit, even without understanding, like unto the hearing of the Mass in Latin, or the receiving the Sacrament of Extreme Unction while in a state of coma. Consequently, the Protestant reads his Bible in times of trouble and danger, in afflictions of body and mind. One who so reads the Bible regularly is considered a Christian whether or not he attends a church, or professes religion in any way.

This helps us to understand why Protestants are so zealous in circulating Bibles. In the hotel rooms of the smaller towns, we frequently find a copy of the "Gideon Bible," with a note attached asking us to read a chapter. The great Bible Societies are the natural result of this principle that the Bible, the Bible alone suffices: this is the religion of the Protestant. If we watch their heroic efforts to stock the whole world with Bibles, printed in all languages, we reach the conclusion that they really believe that the possession of the Bible is the indispensable means of salvation. It is claimed that the Bible Societies of the United States alone have distributed about three

million copies a year. What a tremendous missionary effort! Even if it be admitted that possibly more than half of this number fall into hands of those who have not asked for them, and that many more are placed with illiterates, or semi-literates, there is still a huge number that is foisted upon the general public with its craving for religious information. They receive it, with the admonition: "Read this Bible. It is all that is necessary to save your soul. If the Lord gives you light to understand it, so much the better; but do not worry; you cannot be lost so long as you read the Bible."

No marvel that even criminals boast of reading their Bible; that dishonest men, liars, adulterers, haters and bigots lull themselves to the belief of a condition of righteousness by means of Bible reading! This, of course, proves to be one of the main obstacles to a true conversion. Reading the Bible, and forming one's own dogmas thereby, is easier than belonging to a Church where rules must be kept and dues paid! Many cannot understand why the Catholic Church should be so strict about the use of an authorized text with official annotations; but a glance at the practice of the so-called "Bible Savers" will teach us the danger of indiscriminate Bible reading. Leo XIII sent forth a solemn warning against it, years ago: "You are aware, venerable brethren, that a certain Bible Society is impudently spreading throughout the world, which despising the traditions of the holy Fathers, and the decrees of the Council of Trent, is endeavoring to translate, or rather to pervert, the Scriptures into the vernacular of all nations. It is to be feared that by false

interpretation, the Gospel of Christ will become the Gospel of men, or still worse, the Gospel of the devil."

Pope Pius IX had long before this declared in the same sense: "These crafty Bible Societies which renew the ancient guile of the heretics, cease not to thrust their bibles upon all men . . . their bibles which have been translated against the laws of the Church, and often contain false explanations of the text. Thus the Divine Traditions, the teachings of the Fathers, and the authority of the Catholic Church are rejected, and everyone in his own way interprets the words of the Lord, and distorts their meaning, thereby falling into miserable errors."

Where generations have grown up with the idea of the saving Bible, it is but natural that this claim, of its saving power is a serious impediment to their accepting the "burden" of Catholicity; for we are told we must accept the teaching of the Church against our own impressions, or interpretations of the Holy Book. The less this class of people know of religion, the more content they are with Protestantism. "It does not take long to say the Creed, if we believe only that which we understand," says Dr. O'Malley.

After the written word of God, the spoken word ranks next in importance. Preaching is a very important church service, and according to the older sects, partakes with Bible Reading of a certain sacramental character. In this country, however, this high estimate of the sermon is lessening. John L. Stoddard in his book "Rebuilding a Lost Faith," says: "With Non-Conformists, who possess little or no liturgy, the sermon is the all-important

factor, although too often, being more of an ethical or literary production than a spiritual appeal, it is of little value as an aid to religion. Their services are, of course, characterized by prayers, but these are individually improvised efforts which do not seem to represent the sentiments and aspirations of the auditors, since they elicit from them no response. They have the appearance rather of detached personal performance on the part of the minister, who stands while praying, during which time the members of the congregation also do not kneel, and sometimes do not even close their eyes." He adds that the minister, enjoying the greatest liberty of expression, makes regular orations of his prayer, often with a political point. Ministers or elders have been known to address the Lord, not to ask for help and grace, but to tell Him how to settle certain difficulties according to the mind of the suppliants.

The daily papers keep us informed on the progress (?) of the Protestant pulpit. If we scan the subjects of sermons delivered to a gullible audience under the pretense of giving them the Word of God, or if we read the gist of discourses of prominent clerical spellbinders, or if we happen to pass a meetinghouse in the course of a four week's revival, we come to the conclusion that Bill Sunday is not the only clown in the pulpit. It is hard to imagine to what depths some ministers will stoop to attract the multitudes: debates on profane and political subjects, athletic contests, moving picture productions, jazz music by radio, aesthetic dancing and so forth, are more than once advertized as features of "divine" services.

Protestantism believes in the priesthood of the believers. The minister is only the representative of the faithful, and he receives his authority from his own flock. The preacher differs from any member of his flock officially only, or by natural gifts or special education. He is said to have received a "call"; every member of his church is his own priest, needing not the agency of a minister to convey grace or salvation to him.

Protestantism makes much of St. Paul, as if he were its founder. Protestants claim that their church swept aside the ritualism of St. Peter used in the Catholic Church, for the spirituality of doctrine as taught by St. Paul; and as the Apostle of the Gentiles did away with Jewish ceremonies as unnecessary and obstructive to Christianity, so Protestantism abolished the Mass, Confession, and other sacramental services, establishing in their stead immediate relationship between God and man. Furthermore: the Protestant believes that man is justified not by any means of grace, e.g., penance, good works, but by faith. Good works are said to be the result, not the source of faith. Good works without faith are useless; this is contrary to the Catholic teaching that faith without good works is dead. Again: the Protestant believes that the Spirit of God is given absolutely in response to faith, not through the receiving of the Sacraments. As a consequence, they do not believe in the Sacraments in the Catholic sense. They admit only two: Baptism and the Lord's Supper. But there is an ever-growing tendency to deny that even Baptism is a sacrament; many speak of it as "a rite,"

looking upon it merely as a condition for membership, or an outward sign of having joined the church; they do not ascribe to it the effect of cleansing from Original and Actual Sins.

As to the Lord's Supper, the Lutherans alone believe in the Real Presence, but through *consubstantiation*, not *transubstantiation*. According to this belief, the recipient is himself the consecrator by an act of Faith. If he believes in the Real Presence, he receives the Body of the Lord who is present, together with the bread; otherwise he simply takes bread. As to the Episcopalians, their treatment of the Eucharist runs the scale from the ultra-Catholic practice of reserving even the consecrated wine in the tabernacle to the very latest expression of interpretation of those who see in the Lord's Supper merely a symbol.

Naturally we should like to ask the Protestant how he explains the existence of so many denominations since Christ founded only one Church. He will answer you that there are two kinds of churches: one the invisible church comprising all who believe in Christ and in the Bible as the sole rule of Faith, whose Head is Christ; and a visible church consisting of the different denominations with every conceivable form of organization, belief, and practice. This will explain their saying that it makes no difference what we believe, just so we are united by Faith in an Invisible Church. Of course, the Catholic Church, not being an evangelical church, that is, one that does not consider the Bible the sole rule of Faith, is excluded from their Invisible Church; hence, Catholics cannot be

saved, unless they tear themselves loose from the "tyranny of the Pope, and read the Bible, in spite of ban or inquisition."

This aspect of the confusion of creeds is inexpressibly sad. In fact all false religions are sad because they keep man away from God and from His Truth.

In pointing out these essential characteristics of Protestantism, we do not wish to maintain that all Protestants who live around us are aware of these principles. As a matter of fact, the average Protestant could not give you a summary of the principles his church teaches and he believes. Many of their number would probably confuse principles with practices, and might answer that to be a Christian means to stay away from dances and card playing; not to patronize Sunday baseball, to shun the theater, to take the pledge and leave off swearing. A few might go a little further, and speak of Baptism by immersion, Salvation by Faith alone, and "Close Communion."

The Protestant profession of faith is very elusive; even from the average minister you may not be able to draw a rational answer to your question of what his church teaches. He may give you his individual opinions, but he will admit that many others of his fold entertain different opinions. It is hard to believe that they are not conscious of the low tide of their religious principles. They will admit that many things are not as they should be among them; they pretend to envy you because of the stability of your doctrines, the loyalty of your members, but in the final resort they evidently prefer "Mud

with a little gold in it, to gold with a little mud in it," as Dr. O'Malley expresses it.

Let us sum up this chapter with a quotation from a prominent Protestant of New York, Dr. Crosby:

"The great bulk of the Protestant Church is identified with the world. It has a name to live up to, while it is dead. It has turned its doctrines into nationalism, or rationalism, and its life into selfishness. The old landmarks are gone. Family prayer is given up. Prayer Meetings are ignored, social sins are connived at and even excused; the pulpit is made a stage on which to strut and pose before a gaping world, and religion is made one of the instruments of fashion."

-- XV --

BIGOTRY AND IGNORANCE

"The soldier of the cross has no promise of peace in this world, and he is a poor soldier who fears the face of an enemy. His business is to fight, and to fight bravely, and to die with the harness on, — only the weapons of warfare are spiritual, not carnal." (Dr. Orestes Brownson.)

PROTESTANT prejudice against the Catholic Religion rests either upon ignorance or malice. Often the two are combined; even should you eliminate the one or the other, the feeling of distrust still survives. This universal opposition to the Church naturally results from the very origin of Protestantism which came into existence through revolution, when subjects of Holy Church, usurped the ruling power of superiors. To so usurp power injustice and violence were employed. Men usually hate those whom they have wronged; when the wronged man forgives the injury, he honors himself by an act of charity; but should the aggressor make advances for peace, he admits his wrongdoing, which would humiliate his pride. Therefore he searches for pretenses to justify himself and allay his conscience. This is the psychological explanation of the diabolical hatred the reformers nursed against the Church and the Pope.

The adherents of Protestantism inherited this hatred even as they inherited the name itself. Call it bigotry, or prejudice, intolerance, fanaticism, it always amounts to the same thing: hatred of the Church of Christ.

Intolerance is not a modern vice; it is much older than the Reformation. Socrates was a martyr to his convictions; the Roman pagans hated the early Christians, because the virtuous life of the Christian was a reproach to the Pagan. In the early ages of the Christian Church, heresy was not regarded as a private sin, but as a public offense, as treason not only against the Church, but also against the State. It was therefore punished as such. The heretic thus forced to save his new faith at the very risk of his life, hated his judges; this tradition of religious hatred has come down to the present day, even though centuries have passed since a Protestant has lost his life, or even his freedom, because of his religion.

On the other hand, we Catholics do not need turn back even one page of history to find persecution; a glance at Russia or Mexico will provide proof for this statement. It is well, for the sake of consolation, to remember that persecution was promised us by our Divine Founder. From the time that St. Peter entered Rome to the present era, every generation has witnessed persecution in some form or other. So has this, our country, suffered in its day, and suffers to this day, from the fruits of an intolerant spirit. Whether in the open, or in secret, these attacks will continue as long as the Church endures. All this is evident. The practical question for us is: What are the conditions around us, and how are we to study and meet this prejudice, so that we may gain the confidence of our separated brethren and cause them to listen to our pleadings for religious unity in the true Church?

We may assume when dealing with a sincere Protestant

that his prejudice rests on ignorance. Ignorance on religious matters is so dense that it is to be marvelled at. I am not limiting my remarks to the common people; the educated class also show a lamentable lack of knowledge, not only of Catholic doctrine, but of all religious matters. That distinguished convert, Dr. von Ruville, in his book "Back to Mother Church," writes thus: "I saw that teachers, pastors, theologians, to whom I owed everything I knew, did not have the least knowledge of Catholicism; yet they never hesitated to pass adverse judgment on it, and even treated it with bitter sarcasm." The ex-Jesuit and apostate, Hoensbroech, admitted eleven years after he had returned to Protestantism that "the ignorance of Catholic matters is a widespread evil. I have had experiences since I became a Protestant, in regard to this fact, which I would never have thought possible. And I have gathered these experiences in my relations with men of high intellectual standing: with Protestant college graduates, clergymen of every rank; with university professors, and teachers in theological seminaries. In these circles I heard criticisms on Catholicity which every Catholic school boy could have easily refuted." If the leaders are so ill-informed, can there be any wonder that the common people are so ignorant?

On one occasion a Baptist minister, editor of a religious magazine, called on the author to enlist his coöperation in civic work. In the course of a general conversation, the visitor modestly stated that he knew five languages, English, French and Latin being of that number. The conversation turned on the subject of theological studies;

I handed the visitor a volume of Hurter's *Medulla Theologiae Dogmaticae*; he opened the book with a rather blank look, and asked naïvely: "Why, what is this? Is it in French?" I could not refrain from exclaiming, "I thought you said you knew French and Latin?" "O, it is a long time since I studied it, I have forgotten the most of it." Later, this same scholar astonished the readers of his publication by an article on "Easter." He said it is "the Catholic feast of flowers, which the Roman Church had transferred, like so many other pagan customs, from ante-Christian worship." Of course, he was informed, as were his readers, what Easter really means for Christianity, but soon after his magazine ceased coming to my address, although my subscription had not expired.

A Congregationalist minister called on a Catholic family who were just about to go to evening services. The lady of the house asked the minister to kindly wait in the parlor, until the services were over for she did not like to miss. He assured her, however, that the purpose of his call was to accompany her to the church. After the services which consisted, as usual, of a sermon and Benediction, the minister seriously assured his hostess that his Church likewise believed in the Real Presence, "in fact," he said, "some of our clergymen have such a vivid faith in it, that they place an extra chair in the pulpit for the Lord to occupy."

Because there is so little knowledge of religion in the ministers, there is such overwhelming ignorance among the people; they are not instructed in even the elementary truths of religion. A Presbyterian minister promised in

his Sunday school class a piece of money to anyone who could recite the Apostles' Creed. Doubtless, from past experience he felt he could offer the money without risk of losing it. But this time he miscalculated; a lad of ten arose and recited the Creed without a stop. "How did you learn that?" gasped the minister. "I learned it at the Catholic school," answered the youngster. At another time, a preacher in the Methodist church challenged his class to recite the Ten Commandments. One of the regular attendant pupils of our school rose and recited them without hesitation; but this time the preacher scored, for the lad recited them according to the Catholic order, instead of dividing the First into two parts, and combining the Ninth and Tenth, as the Protestants do.

On one of my missions there dwelt an old man who was a coal digger on week days, but a preacher on Sundays, — if he could find hearers. He preached the gospel of "personal inspiration," as he styled it; the people called it "Uncle Tom's religion." There is no knowing what nonsense he foisted upon his audience; still many people heard him and believed that in listening to him they were attending divine service. He told everyone that he believed in "the goodness of all religions." Yet when we had a mission for non-Catholics, he was about the only man of the vicinity who remained scrupulously away. Once on occasion of a funeral, I surprised him, as I returned to the church from the cemetery, coming from behind the altar; no doubt, he had been looking for Catholic secrets, or possibly, ammunition. As he had

the grace to blush when I came upon him, I could not be so cruel as to ask him for what he was looking!

A certain poor widow had a son who was outgrowing her authority. He had attended different schools, but had made no progress and finally left school, to roam the streets of the town, no one giving him any attention except the local police. At last this mother came to us bringing her boy and asked us to give him a chance. Contrary to expectations, this boy began to do well, was interested in his books, and liked his teacher; moreover, he behaved well. Now, the boy's mother was a Methodist, and when her minister, formerly a butcher and a rather poorly educated man, heard that the boy was in our school, he was moved "to snatch the brand from the fire." — "Sister S. . . .," quoth he, "what do I hear? They say you are sending that boy of yours to the Catholic school." — "Yes," she admitted; "Charlie had not done well at the other schools, but now he is taking interest in his books, and his manners are getting so much better." "Why, this will never do, sister; take him out, or you will regret it, mark my words!" This boy was withdrawn, and soon he was seen loafing through the town as he had formerly done. Strangely enough, the minister and no one else worried about that!

On one of my mission trips, I went far back into a mountain county where no Catholic priest had yet penetrated. Quite a crowd of curious natives assembled that night to look me over. It was bitter cold, and we pressed close about the huge fireplace. These people said they had not heard a regular minister preach for a long

time, and asked me to preach to them. I spoke to them about the coming of our Saviour to redeem us, and to forgive our sins; I instructed them how to examine their conscience, and how to make acts of sorrow for sin. It was all very new and interesting to them. They stayed late and when after speaking for an hour, I was ready to quit, they urged me to continue. The next morning I said Mass in the best room of the cabin and again several dropped in to watch me. As I vested for the Holy Sacrifice, I explained to them the different vestments, showed them the chalice and the host and told them that at the Consecration Jesus would come down into that room just as He had done in the stable of Bethlehem on Christmas night, nineteen hundred years ago. After Mass, an elderly man with a grey beard, came up to me and shaking my hand, said, "Brother, I learned something to-day, I never knew before." I thought that likely enough, since he had never seen a priest nor a Mass before, still I did want to know what had impressed him in such a way. His answer staggered me: "That Christ was born on Christmas Day," he said. "This is the first time I heard that and I am sixty years old." I asked him if his preacher had not told him that, and he replied: "I reckon he does not know it himself!"

Of course these may be isolated cases of the ignorant so-called ministers and country preachers. At present, even in rural districts, the preachers show better education, many having a high school course, and in certain cases, even some seminary training. But their knowledge of Catholicity is either non-existent, or so tinged with

narrow-mindedness, bigotry, or misinformation that they encourage the people's remaining in ignorance of the great Mother Church. As an example: an educated Baptist preacher took the agency for the ill-famed *Menace*; he told his people that it was the worthiest cause they could support for the sake of Truth! His zeal in spreading this "truth" was so great, that he would collect the twenty-five cents subscription from his neighbors, if some families protested that their means did not permit them to subscribe. This same minister went to a local printer and told him he could not save his soul if he persisted in printing some Catholic pamphlets I was having published for circulation in that region.

The blame for fomenting religious prejudice must in the second place, be laid to the charge of secret societies. In the writer's town, where the foregoing incidents transpired, Shriners, Odd Fellows, and the Junior Order of American Mechanics flourished. The last named, in due time, blossomed into one hundred per cent Klansmen; they showed open hostility to Catholics. For that very reason, they were easier to handle than the others, who shot their poisonous darts from ambush, under cover of a broad-minded humanitarianism. The quaint proverb, "You cannot knock a man down who does not stand up," is applicable here. A travelling man from a city came at intervals to this town; he was a great organizer, and a Mason, and was popularly called "Smiling Dave." After his visit to the town, I generally met with a certain amount of distrust and embarrassment on the part of the Protestants whom I was accustomed to meet daily in

a familiar and perfectly friendly way. For a week or two after "Smiling Dave" fared forth, these good people ceased to call me "Father," but addressed me as "Mr." By and by they dropped back to "Father," until another visit from the salesman pricked their sluggish conscience.

These same one hundred per cent Americans, defenders of human liberty, patrons of education, always standing for social reform, charity, and all forms of progress, forgot their principles "once upon a time" when we Catholics undertook a Drive for funds to enlarge our school. They began a counter campaign, and, aided by every preacher in the town, canvassed every home and gave solemn warning that to help the Catholic school would be to open the very gates of hell upon them! The most amusing part of the whole matter was that they launched a Drive for one hundred thousand dollars to build a gymnasium for the public school; as soon as our Drive was over, however, they dropped the gymnasium project as no longer necessary. Can it be a subject of wonder that the common people are ignorant and prejudiced when they receive their impressions from such sources? And yet, such was the desire to benefit by Catholic culture that at the very time of these rival Drives, almost two hundred Protestant children were attending our Catholic mission school; while fathers and brothers were working to retard its growth. Apparently, this was not bona fide opposition, but rather a resistance fostered by the lodges, and forced upon the people. It was rumored at the time, that several speakers had been invited to harangue the people in closed meetings upon "the dangers of Catholic education!"

The ignorance of the rank and file is indeed extraordinary; in some instances, it is also most naïve. A woman who had never seen the inside of a Catholic church was shown through ours one day by a Catholic lady. Taking it for granted that the visitor must have heard many things about the confessional, the lady showed the arrangement of the confessional on the interior, and permitted the non-Catholic woman to step into the penitent's side. Looking through the screen, this woman asked "Must you tell a sin through each one of these little holes?" This same lady walked rather gingerly through the church aisles; later she said she had been afraid of trapdoors in the floor, for she had heard how Catholics liked to let Protestants disappear into mysterious dungeons. Yet, with all this nonsense, they are eager to learn something of Catholic practice, and it would be very easy to make converts among them, if they were only freed from outside interferences which undermine our efforts and frustrate the work.

At one time one of our high school girls, quite talented, was almost ready for baptism when the members of the Methodist church became aware of her "danger," and decided something must be done to save Hazel from the claws of the Roman beast. They elected this child — she was only seventeen — president of the "Eastern Star," a masonic auxiliary. Naturally, this guileless girl was so proud of the honor that she gave up the idea of entering the Church when she found she could not belong to both at the same time.

A Mr. B. . . ., in capacity of tax assessor, came to the

priest's house; he saw a large statue of the Sacred Heart there on a table, the pastor busy redecorating it. The visitor could not take his eyes from that statue of the Blessed Saviour. There were actually tears in his eyes when he said: "Why can we not have things like this in our own churches? They would certainly help our faith more than grand sermons." He was a sincere Baptist; I do not know whether or not he ever broached the subject of statues in his church meetings. I am afraid not, for his minister belonged to the *rabid* type of preachers, that class of prophets of whom the Lord spoke, when He said: "They prophesy falsely in my name; I sent them not, neither have I commanded them, nor have I spoken to them." ¹

But preachers and secret orders are not the only wolves in sheeps' clothing that rob these good people of an opportunity to learn the true Faith. There are men and women of our own Church whose lives give the lie to the holiness of life which we preach; they are as a festering sore on the Catholic body. Catholic women who have gone astray; Catholic men who are infected with moral leprosy; Catholic youths grown up in rebellion against authority; Catholic new-comers to a town or city who remain only long enough to give scandal, and then disappear: these do a great deal more harm to our sacred cause than the antagonism of preachers, or the rantings of revivalists. The fact that the sins of Catholics are considered so much worse than the sins of others, is in reality a compliment to us. It means that a bad Catholic

¹ Jerem., xiv, 14.

is of rarer occurrence than a bad Protestant. But woe to us, if we have but one black sheep in our fold! Our separated brethren are prone to generalize!

On one occasion I met a good simple country woman who told me she had no use for Catholics, because they stole, drank whiskey, and cursed. On my part, I could truthfully plead innocent of these charges, but she told me that an Irish peddler once came to their farm, and they gave him lodging for the night; that he spent a long time at his prayers before going to bed, but that in the morning, it was found he had disappeared together with their money and other valuables. Moreover, there was Bill White, who was a Catholic, traded horses, was drunk every day, and cursed awfully! Now as to Bill he had never been a Catholic; the Baptists had more claim on him, had they cared to show it. But our misfortune was that when Bill was in his cups he professed great love for the Catholic Church, so of course we received credit for his unsolicited admiration.

Again: there are those would-be missionaries among our Catholic laity, who lacking knowledge themselves, nevertheless persist on preaching Catholic doctrine "in season and" especially "out of season." For example: I heard of a Syrian peddler who mingled much with the mountain people, and never tired of telling them about the Catholic Faith. Among other bits of wisdom distilled from his lips, was this: whenever he gained three hundred days indulgence, it meant that he could commit sin again for another three hundred days without harm! An elderly German woman told the writer that when her

neighbors worried her about religion and reading the Bible, she would say: "Get away with your Bible and with your Lord and all that stuff. We Catholics have our Pope and he makes our religion for us, and that is the way we believe." This is one of the many cases where we may well pray: "Lord protect me from my friends; as to my enemies, I will take care of them myself."

Why all these examples of ignorance? Simply to show the necessity of instruction. We have to preach and teach the Truth both by word and action, by influence, and especially by the printed word. Let us use all the instruments for information at our disposal to impress the masses with the beauty, purity, solemnity, and consolation of our God-given Faith. The priest cannot do all by himself; hence let him train his parishioners to become missionaries both by word and example. Cardinal Newman said to a group of Catholics who wished to learn how to help the Cause of Conversion: "Protestantism is fierce because it does not know you. Oblige men to know you; persuade them, importune them into knowing you. Strive to have men look steadily at you. I do not say they will become Catholics, but they will cease to make you a byword, and a reproach, or of inflicting upon you the cross of unpopularity. Our enemies know that if non-Catholics ever come to know what the Catholic Church stands for, all hatred and opposition will pass away. Hence they strive to fill the minds of the ignorant with the most horrid lies about Catholics and their religion."

There are two ways of fighting an enemy: one, to

smite him and confound him; the other, to reconcile him and make him your friend. With the average Protestant, as we know him and daily meet him, we do not need a weapon of violence. Versmeersch says: "Heresy is no longer the social offense that it once was. In the seventeenth century in France it was stated as an incontrovertible axiom that for a state to maintain itself in peace, there must be one king, one law, one faith." We need no longer deal with heresy as a crime, but rather as a disease, a social ailment, which calls for charity and kindness. In caring for a diseased Christian, we must not betray any repulsion towards his pitiable condition, nor must we take offence when he writhes in his delirium and abuses us, just as feverish patients do, not knowing that we mean well toward him.

"If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as a sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. Charity is patient, is kind: . . . is not ambitious, seeketh not her own, is not provoked to anger, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, *but rejoiceth with the truth.*" ¹

¹ I Cor., xiii, 1-6.

-- XVI --

BIGOTRY AND MALICE

"And you shall be hated by all men for my name's sake: but he that shall persevere unto the end, he shall be saved." (Matt., x, 22.)

"The Church in this world is always the Church militant. She will always have her enemies with whom she can never make peace so long as she remains faithful to her Lord." (Dr. Brownson.)

As mentioned before, persecution is a legacy from our Divine Founder; He himself was persecuted with diabolical cunning and malice, His every word perverted, His every action misconstrued. He warned his disciples not to expect anything better, that if the Master had been persecuted, so too would be the followers; indeed, "the hour cometh that whosoever killeth you, will think that he doth a service to God." ¹ Never was prophecy more literally fulfilled. The pharisees persecuted the man born blind because he accepted the gift of sight from our Lord; they thought to kill Lazarus because Jesus had raised him from the dead and many had come to believe on account of this miracle. According to The Acts of the Apostles, ² the Sadducees persecuted the Apostles. The elders, scribes and false witnesses persecuted St. Stephen ³; and further on we read: "Facta est autem in illa die persecutio magna in Ecclesia, quae erat Jerosolymis, et omnes dispersi sunt per regiones." ⁴ From his own experience alone, St. Paul could have written a book on

¹ John, xvi, 2.

² Acts, iv, 3.

³ Acts, vi, 12.

⁴ Acts, viii, 1.

persecution. "Consilium fecerunt in unum Judaei, ut eum interficerent." ¹ "And at the same time Herod, the king, stretched forth his hands to afflict some of the church. And he killed James, the brother of John, with the sword. And seeing that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to take up Peter also." ² How malice disguised itself as respectability is shown even in those early days: "But the Jews stirred up religious and honorable women, and the chief men of the city, and raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas: and cast them out of their coasts." ³ No wonder that St. Paul warns Timothy, his beloved co-laborer, not to think of peace, but of warfare and persecution, "for all that will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution." ⁴ "But evil men and seducers shall grow worse and worse; erring, and driving into error." ⁵ We could almost think that the Apostle was referring to the present traducers of the Church, our hooded and unhooded persecutors, ex-priests, real and false, fanatical preachers of the gospel of hatred, when he speaks thus of the days to come. "Men shall be lovers of themselves, covetous, haughty, proud, blasphemers. . . . Without affection, without peace, slanderers. . . . Having an appearance indeed of godliness, but denying the power thereof. . . . For of this sort are they who creep into houses, and lead captive silly women, laden with sins. . . . Ever learning, and never attaining to the knowledge of truth." ⁶

Persecution, then, has accompanied the Church

¹ Acts ix, 23.

² Ib., xii, 1-3.

³ Ib., xiii, 50.

⁴ II Tim., iii, 12.

⁵ Ib., 13.

⁶ Ib., 2-7.

throughout the centuries: persecution under the Synagogue, persecution under the pagan emperors of Rome, persecution under the apostate Julian; persecutions under the Persians, the Goths, the Lombards, the Vandals, under the Mohammedans, the Iconoclasts. In Europe we witness the secularization of Austria under Joseph; we see the Illuminati in Bavaria, the Kulturkampf of Prussia, the spoliation of the Papal States in Italy, the confiscation of Church property in France in more modern times, as we witnessed the persecutions of the Church during the Directoire at an earlier date; finally, we see Russia and Mexico of to-day.

Should we expect that our own country alone of the nations escape persecution? No; we have had our share in it, too, in spite of the guarantee of religious liberty in the Constitution. If the devil cannot have the coöperation of tyrannical rulers and governments he will be satisfied in sowing distrust and hatred in the heart of our neighbor. Instead of other powerful allies, he simply "stirs up religious and honorable women, and the chief men of the city" and raises persecution on a smaller scale. You may call them Knownothings, A. P. A's, Sons of Temperance, Sons of Liberty, American Mechanics, or Knights of the Big Forest; whether they preach the message of Liberty, Nationalism, Patriotism, Nordics, Fraternalism, Democracy, Prohibition, Evolution, or Free Research, the spirit of the thing is always identical with the soul of the French philosopher who prepared the way for the French Revolution: "Ecrasez l'infame!" The tools are always the same: Deception

of the People as to the real soul of Catholicism, so as to cause them to lend themselves to the fanatical powers of darkness.

There are, then, two adversaries: the *mind* of the persecution which is full of fiendish hatred of Divine Truth; and the *body* of the persecution, ignorant of the crime it commits; like unto the soldiers who crucified Jesus and for whom He prayed, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."¹ Thus while practicing charity towards the poor victims of Protestantism around us, we must fight the master mind which guides it. Here we are to remember that the only good fighter is the long fighter, namely he that keeps at it; not he who occasionally writes a scorching letter to some local editor, and fancies he has saved the Church from peril. The true disciple of the Lord must be on the alert always, so that when he is asked: "Watchman, what of the night?" he can give an account of his vigilance.

Now, naturally, the first step in our warfare against malicious slanderers of the Church is to frustrate the object of our defamers by broadcasting the truth; the next step is to expose their falsehoods. In the World War, one of the strongest weapons against the enemy was propaganda. This was war of itself, one side outdoing the other in the effort to mold the neutral opinion. This propaganda was for the most part based on deliberate misrepresentation. Our adversaries are carrying on just such lying propaganda, and they do us a certain amount of harm, as long as we do not refute their charges. If

¹ Luke, xxiii, 34.

we do not only prove their charges untrue, but can make counter charges, based on logic, history, and their own arguments, then we have a fair instrument to help us in our warfare. If, for example, an "ex-nun" visits the town, it would be well to prove that her statements about convents are libelous; if we can, moreover, expose her as an impostor who has never joined a Sisterhood, much less taken vows, her credit is gone and she can no longer obtain a hearing from people who care for truth. If a so-called "ex-priest" delivers lectures for men only on the secrets of the confessional, it may be well to announce a lecture in the Catholic church on the Sacrament of Penance. If you have his record, and can have him arrested for bigamy, embezzlement, or some other unsavory cause, it will destroy the effect of his lecture the more thoroughly. Or, you could go accompanied by some honorable men, Catholic or Protestant, into the hall and ask for a hearing when the lecture is finished. The chances are, he will try to have you silenced; if he cannot succeed in that, his language will probably be such that the majority of the audience will quickly sympathize with your views. It requires no little courage to stand up in a hostile assembly and unmask such an impostor. Some can do this very successfully, but others, especially priests with quick temper, or those who are of a timid or retiring disposition, should not trust themselves with such a task lest they do more harm than good.

The Catholic Guilds in England are training their members for this special kind of warfare: to explain the truth, unmask hypocrisy, confuse the enemy to his face,

and hold their own ground without losing their cool judgment, or their temper in the event of counter attack and opposition. We must be sure of our ground; never make a statement that cannot be proved at the moment; never try to refute false doctrines by simply denying them, but be prepared to bring the most telling and the plainest arguments into play. If we attend political meetings and debates, we may be able to learn the technique useful in such cases as we have now under discussion. We must be ready in argument at all times; and not only when we must meet our opponents on the public rostrum. If we are to have a private interview with some one who has attacked the Church, we should prepare ourselves just as carefully as if we were to deliver a public lecture on controversial matters. "*Sermo vester semper in gratia sale sit conditus, ut sciatis quomodo oporteat vos unicuique respondere.*"¹

Monsignor Benson "had no use for hole-and-corner Catholicism." He said: "The day for that is past; now we must have our battles in the open, and I, for one, am not going to be put on the defensive." He encouraged his friend, Father Watts, to use strong language in dealing with intentional falsifiers, saying: "The Pharisees must have been hurt very much when our Lord called them vipers and hypocrites and that sort of thing, but it was very good for them, all the same. You need never be afraid of letting yourself go; you will never use stronger language about His enemies than our Lord did Himself." Since he was a convert from the Anglican Church, of

¹ Col., iv, 6.

which he had been an ordained minister, Msgr. Benson's opinions are of value to us. He was, personally, of the militant type; his sermons both as to content and delivery indicate that. He did yeoman work as an author to expose the evil of the so-called "Reformation," with all its blood-thirsty, unreasoning hatred. He writes:

"In penal days, the supreme duty of Catholics was to keep the Faith. It was for this that their fathers bled and suffered. It is not to be wondered at that here and there Catholics should be found who still are apt, almost unconsciously, to regard this as their whole duty before God and man, and to forget that the supreme commission given by Christ to His disciples was the handing on fully as much as the retaining of the truth given to their charge. . . . In the present day of mutual toleration and comparative freedom, surely the suspended commission revives once more, and the duty of Catholics (and especially of priests), lies not only in the sphere of pastoral work, but of missionary endeavor: it must not be sufficient to keep the light burning; it must be fanned once more into a conflagration that will spread." ¹

Msgr. Benson's idea was that the Church in England, as also in the United States, must first of all stand up for her rights. The ceremonies of the Church, the Mass and the Sacraments had for so many years been confined to hiding places, and later to the privacy of church edifices, so that Protestants never became acquainted with the real beauty of it all. It was to meet this situation that the famous convert, Father Fletcher, with Lister Drum-

¹ Benson's Preface to "Non-Catholic Denominations."

mond, founded "Our Lady's Guild of the Ransomed," a society of prayer and action for the conversion of England. In the face of bigotry and hostility, Father Fletcher, vested in surplice and stole, went into the streets of London in procession, having the statue of the Blessed Virgin carried, and he did this to make a public appearance of Catholicity; perhaps, too, in order to provoke the enemies into opposition, so that he might smite them with the sword of Truth. These ransomers were the pioneers of the numerous Catholic Guilds, who on Sunday afternoons disseminate Catholic literature in Hyde Park, and on the very streets of London, and in other populous cities. They inaugurated an organized war on the lies and misrepresentations levelled not only against Catholic doctrine, but against revealed Christianity in general. One wonders what kind of success Monsignor Benson would have met with in this kind of work. His eloquence was enrapturing we are told by those who heard him. He preached with a rapid and irresistible vehemence that would certainly have drawn great throngs; but the fierceness of his attacks might have provoked division, rather than have won converts. His biographer relates that once in the course of a lecture given by Benson, a man rose in the audience to express his approval of what was being said. Without waiting for the man to express his thoughts, the Monsignor taking for granted that the interruption was meant to badger him, gave the poor fellow a verbal drubbing. The man was slightly intoxicated, and besides was slow of speaking! An incident of this sort shows that the Monsignor lacked the

patience required for missionary work, and possibly explains why he did not actively interest himself with regular Guild work.

But he did a great service for the missionary when he wrote his book "Non-Catholic Denominations." He realized that the priests who would fight Protestantism must needs know its tenets and its practices and organizations in order to deal intelligently with it. "An enormous amount of energy has been wasted in the past," he writes in his Introduction to this work, "in assaulting positions that are no longer held. . . ." "In a word, therefore, it is necessary if controversy is to be fruitful, that the missionary should know something, at least in outline, of the religious theories of those to whom he is sent. He must be able to recognize and to do justice to those portions of religious truth, those true but imperfect and disproportioned principles held by those whom he seeks to convert." This need is so much the more urgent when there is question of correcting false statements made either on the platform, in the pulpit, or through the press. After a knowledge of their doctrines, we must try to gain some knowledge of the character of those we must refute. Men of small minds and yet smaller character, who are usually without following or influence, we may safely let alone, especially if we know that they only try to arouse us so that we may dignify them by some reply.

The editor of a small country paper with a subscription of less than five hundred, began printing paragraphs about Catholic Superstition; the number of Catholics in the town was very small, but the Protestant readers

themselves resented the infusion of religious prejudice quite as well as did the Catholics. A visiting Catholic missionary, nevertheless, thought it his duty to call on the editor and ask him what he had against the Catholic Church. "Nothing in the world," said the man! "Why, the best friends I have are members of your Church. O, those articles? Well, I was not at home, and the printer just wanted to make up copy and got hold of an old number of the 'Menace'; that's all. O, no! I have nothing at all against your Church." The missionary was well pleased with this interview, but was rather taken aback when he saw in the "*Advocate*" of the following week an editorial saying that a Roman Priest had called at the office trying to browbeat the editorial staff into a retraction; but they wanted to have it known that "they would stick to their guns and would exercise their right of free speech in the very face of the Pope of Rome!"

Controversy calls for erudition, logic, dignity of appearance, clearness in expression and patience; virtues which are not always paired with the necessary eloquence for a verbal duel; hence, defense by literary means, has better ground for success than has the personal encounter. Occasions arise when essential principles of our Holy Faith are attacked; we must not remain silent! Peace at any price will not do in such cases. When our neighbor poisons our well, or trespasses on our premises destroying our most prized possessions, there is no time for good-natured forbearance. The erstwhile primary school, referred to in these pages, expanded in good time into a

high school. At once there begun a campaign of defamation to frustrate our plans. Contrary to the advice of peaceful Catholic friends who thought it wiser to let matters stand, I sent a strong article to the local paper demanding fair play, and setting forth constitutional rights of private education. My article told the public how much our school saved the town in taxation, and furthermore made clear that while our Sisters were modest and peaceful women, they belonged to an incorporated body, and that the protection of the law would be invoked against their slanderers. This helped at once, and the new high school began its life without further interference.

At the time our country entered the World War, rumors were spread throughout the region that the Catholic Mission school was flying the German flag. Of course, no one had seen the flag, but the lie was believed in many circles. I paid but little attention to it, thinking it was a joke, until Protestant friends assured me there was much feeling on the subject, and that police and the Lodges had been asked to investigate. The rumor, indeed, had spread to the neighboring towns and villages, and there was talk of an invasion by the men of the region with the avowed purpose of burning our church and school. Then I wrote a flaming article to the paper; I insisted on paying for it as an advertisement, in order to guarantee that it would not be cut down by the editor. I asked the public whether or not they had ever seen any flag except the Stars and Stripes waving over our Academy? Since the school was on the crest of a hill and was the only school in town that boasted a steel flag

pole, there could certainly be no secret as to what flag we flew. This article brought unexpected results; a committee of preachers and lawyers called on me and congratulated me on the courageous stand taken. They invited me to accept a place on the program for a patriotic demonstration to be held at an early date, which invitation I accepted to show the good will of the Catholic population. When the demonstration was held, our school had the best exhibition, and I myself, in spite of my well known teutonic ancestry, graced the platform, sitting side by side with the Governor of the State!

On the occasion of an election for school trustees, a Catholic made the race and was elected; of course this would never do! A physician, a prominent Mason, obtained a number of copies of the spurious "Oath of the Knights of Columbus," and circulated them among all the good Americans to demonstrate the danger of allowing such people a word on educational matters. A well known Catholic lady called on this physician and asked him if he really believed this Oath to be genuine? He said he did not know, but admitted it would be awful if it were genuine. In the next week's paper, there appeared a brief notice, written by the pastor, telling those interested of the recent decision of the higher courts of California in deciding a libel suit in favor of the K. of C. This notice also modestly suggested that the case could be tested here also in our home State. This had the desired effect, and made the bogus note useless for domestic propaganda.

A Methodist minister secured the services of a reviv-

alist for the avowed purpose of lecturing on Catholicism. Some of the subjects of his lectures were: "Catholic Superstition and Practices"; "Paying to Get out Of Hell"; "Who wants to Adore Mary?" The local priest saw that this was rather a low form of attack and hesitated to act, thinking that his Protestant friends, and more especially, the patrons of our schools would settle the matter themselves. Nor was he disappointed. Our Protestant friends arose in a body against the unfortunate calumniator and the services ended abruptly in the middle of the week. The hapless minister who had invited this revivalist soon afterwards received a "call" to other fields.

At one time, the entire locality went "Menace"-mad. The Baptist minister, before referred to, had gone to great pains to have every good Protestant subscribe for this sheet. Some of our non-Catholic pupils actually brought copies into the school, and told Sister that "Papa says it is the best paper he ever read." I had a folder printed, entitled "Do You read the Menace?" There were different paragraphs, under the following headings: Do you think it clean reading? Is it helpful to your religion? Does it make you better and more pious? Do you feel ashamed when a Catholic friend catches you with it? and so on. This leaflet we mailed to as many addresses as we could secure of those who were on the "Menace" mailing list. A sufficient supply was left at the post office to be taken up by casual passers-by; others were left in the banks, on counters of the stores, and, of course, copies were given the school children for distribu-

tion at private homes. The effect was most interesting: some of the patrons of the school came to apologize personally for having the "Menace" in the house, putting the blame on the minister; others sent word that they received copies against their will, and that they always burn them without opening the wrapper (?). Some were seen to throw the paper on the floor of the post office when they thought themselves observed by a Catholic, as this mail was handed them. The "Menace" fell suddenly into ill-repute.

The one dogma the most of modern Protestants hold in common is "Prohibition." The fact that but few Catholic priests grow enthusiastic over the Volstead Law, often creates the impression that we favor the use of intoxicants; such an impression opens wide the door of attack at protracted meetings, temperance conventions, and at election time. It would be, of course, most imprudent to preach against Prohibition; but sometimes an article in the paper calling on people to be temperate and sober, without mentioning the Volstead Law, will create a good impression on logical Protestants who can very well distinguish between voluntary and enforced temperance.

The fact that bigotry is the daughter of envy is never more clear than at election time, where one of the candidates is a Catholic. There are outbursts of prejudice then from quarters hitherto unsuspected. There will always be much excitement when, for example, the local Catholic church has a highly successful mission with a gifted speaker who can draw throngs for his lectures; or if

the Catholics seek to enlarge their school, or to build one that will surpass the sectarian schools of the locality; or if a Catholic is engaged to teach in the public school. These waves of excitement are not caused by religious zeal at all: they are the product of envy and jealousy. The bitterness growing out of such agitation is apt to make life very unpleasant, even hard, especially for those who are dependent on the public for their living. This is the time for the pastor to draw his sword. But let him remember it must be the fight of a gentleman, and the weapons must be a gentleman's weapons; i.e., a dignified appeal to justice and common sense. It is said that a gentleman rarely meets with rudeness; nor can he ever win by such means; for one thing, such a course will give the opponent a right to use similar weapons; he is apt to employ lies and subterfuges too, and these we cannot employ at all as against our standing and our conscience. There are, of course, still some "soggarths" of the old school who can go farther in bloodless warfare of words than most of us; and they are feared — and let us hope, respected — so that defamers maintain a safe distance in their regard. But men of this type are the exception and cannot be taken as exemplars.

The Church has produced wonderful apologists on whom we may draw; wisdom, learning, piety, experience concur with their genius to store up for us priceless information and advice. The priest who wishes to be always ready in any emergency, must keep himself well informed, so he can use pen and word as occasion requires. Of course he will keep fresh and vivid the fundamental

truths of holy religion; further, he will strive to popularize the dogmatic lore garnered in seminary and university days by reading contiguous works in the vernacular. He will find in the works of Cardinal Manning, Cardinal Newman, Archbishop Spalding, as in *The Faith of our Fathers*, by Cardinal Gibbons, *End of Religious Controversy*, by Milner, Conway's *Question Box*, Hunter's *Outlines of Dogmatic Theology*, and scores of later works, veritable gold mines of instruction and information.

To learn the art of controversy, he will find valuable help in the lives and works of great converts; such as, Newman, Faber, and others. Newman's *Apologia pro Vita Sua*; da Costa's *From Canterbury to Rome*; Von Ruville's *Zurueck sur heiligen Kirche*; Kinsman's *Salve Mater*, and especially the excellent book by Stoddard, *Rebuilding a Lost Faith*, have the advantage of giving the reader not only a clear and convincing argument in favor of Catholicity, but also give us a glimpse into the intellectual and religious life of Protestant scholars and thinkers. He who would be a master in controversy must also be deeply versed in both the historical matter and the scientific questions which play a large part in non-Catholic religious thought. *The History of the English Reformation*, by Cobbett; Janssen's *History of the German People During the Middle Ages*; Grisar's *Life of Luther*; Pastor's *History of the Popes*; books on the Temporal Power, the Tractarian Movement, the Vatican Council, On Galileo, the Inquisition, St. Bartholomew's Massacre, History of the Jesuits, etc., will round out his

education and fit him to speak and write interestingly for the good of Mother Church. Nor must he ignore the other side. If we wish to invade the enemy's country, we must have charts to find our way. For this purpose we have the very good book of Msgr. Benson, *Non-Catholic Denominations*. A book somewhat similar, but with closer reference to American conditions, we have from the pen of Rev. Virgilius Krull, C. PP. S., in *Christian Denominations*. Still more valuable, since it comes from the other side, is *Study of the Sects* by W. H. Lyon, a Unitarian minister. Judging from his treatment of "Roman Catholicism," we have reason to believe he has given us a fair and correct estimate of the sects. In order to have an appreciation of the soul and of the mentality of the Protestant, we do well to read casually one of the sermons printed in the daily papers, or scan the questions and answers that form a feature in many papers.

Having listened to the inspirations of the Lord as gleaned from Scripture and Theology; and having absorbed a great zeal for the honor of God, we must moderate our zeal, and temper our enthusiasm with prudence and charity. We must constantly bear in mind that our task is to save souls, not to confound them.

Let us not be sad because Nineveh is not destroyed, or because fire does not fall upon the godless Samaria. It is not our mission to call for fire and brimstone to destroy those who do not hear us, but our mission is to pray for the grace of conversion for them. We must not like Elias slay the prophets of Baal, lest we have to flee before a modern Jezabel; and then being arrived where we

expect to find shelter and praise for our acts, we be asked, as was Elias when he came to Mt. Horeb: “‘What dost thou here, Elias?’ And he answered: ‘With zeal I have been zealous for the Lord God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant; they have thrown down thy altars. . . .’ And He said to him; ‘Stand upon the mount before the Lord. . . .’ And a strong wind came so that it overthrew the mountains, but the Lord was not in the wind. . . . Then an earthquake shook the very foundations of the earth, but God was not in the earthquake. . . . Then a devastating fire raged all about him and the Lord was not in the fire. . . . And after the fire a whistling of a gentle air. And when Elias heard it, he covered his face with his mantle,” for he knew the Lord was in the gentle air.¹

Not by violent vituperation; not by shaking the ground on which they stand by theological refutations; not by the fire of irony and the flame of consuming zeal, but through the soft whisper of gentleness and love must we convey to those who know Him not, the lesson of His Presence.

¹ Cf., III Kings, xix.

-- XVII --

MIXED MARRIAGE

"Let the unbelieving husbands be won by the conversation of the wives." (I Peter, iii, 1.)

MORE than one bishop, and quite a number of priests, are credited with saying that mixed marriage brings good to the Church. Perhaps, however, after more experience in the cura animarum they have changed their opinion as to the intermarriage of Catholics and heretics. A writer in the Homiletic Monthly, aghast, asks whether such views are to be laid at the door of heresy or temerity? For our part, we should like to amend the above verdict by adding a few words: "Mixed marriage brings both good and evil to the Church." Of course, the evil results are more apparent than the good; from the very beginning of Christianity mixed marriage was looked upon as perilous to the Faith. Still it is evident that it has always been considered an unavoidable evil, because the granting of dispensations has kept steady pace with the condemnation of the practice. In the very early Christian times, the marriage of a Christian with a Pagan was not held invalid by the Church, and more especially, if the Pagan later became a Christian. Marriage with Jews was considered more objectionable because of the greater hatred the latter nursed against the Christians.

The "*impedimentum disparitatis cultus*" came into practice more through custom than by actual legislation.

The first trace of it as an article of Canon Law, we find in the "Decretum Gratianum," published about 1150; hence it was a "dirimens" invalidating marriage ipso facto, unless a dispensation had been granted by the proper ecclesiastical authority. Marriage with heretics was declared illicit for the Catholic, but not invalid. How much the Church disapproves of the mixed marriage may be gathered from the number of councils and synods that declared against them; e.g.: Elvira, Laodicea, Chalcedon, and Trullo. This latter condemned all mixed marriages as invalid; this was in contradiction with the Roman rule then prevailing which declared such marriages illicit only.

The Council of Trent, through its decree "Tametsi," inaugurated the movement to a return to the ancient discipline of the Church, an action that was most timely, since the large increase of heretics at that period made the problem more serious than ever. It is to be remarked, however, that the Church in such a grave contingency, acted with the utmost leniency and deliberation; for although the law was designed to discourage mixed marriage, yet wherever serious obstacles intervened to hinder its enforcement, exceptions were made. Thus did Benedict XIV suspend the "Tametsi" by a decree of November 4, 1741, in Holland and in Belgium; Pius VI soon afterward did the same for Ireland; other Popes gradually extended the exemption to other countries. Similar concession was made later to Germany, Austria, Switzerland, and to oversea missionary regions. Three conditions, however, were always insisted on:

the free exercise of religion by the Catholic party, the Catholic education of all children of the marriage, and an honest effort to bring about the conversion of the non-Catholic by instruction, example, and prayer.

Within our own times the saintly Pius X, by the decree "Ne Temere" extended the provisions of the "Tametsi" to the whole world and made marriage of any Catholic invalid unless it was entered into before the pastor and two witnesses; but yielding to diplomatic pressure, and seeking to avoid greater evils, by a later decree "Provida," he exempted Germany from the force of this legislation.

These facts show that the Church is not indifferent to the situation in our own times: it is impossible to prevent mixed marriage, and the Church is unable to save all; yet she knows that if dispensation were refused under any consideration, her losses would be much greater than they now are.

Of the recent trend both in Europe and our own country to question as to whether it were not wiser to refuse any and all dispensations for mixed marriage, we may say: in all prohibitive measures there is found a certain element of fanaticism and radicalism foreign to the spirit of the Church, and that element is not lacking in the question under discussion. The prohibitionists forget the long-suffering of the Lord toward the weak; His forbearance toward Sidon and Samaria; they forget, too, the story of the cockle and the wheat. They heap up a great array of evils resulting from mixed marriage, and on the strength of their own statistics they demand

that Pope and Bishop grant no more dispensations. As if our Superiors had never heard of these evils, or had failed in their duty to stem the tide!

What are the real losses from mixed marriage? One priest reports 158 mixed marriages in his large congregation; 113 of this number were Catholic women; in 45 cases the man was a Catholic. This would prove that the girls who marry Protestants outnumber the men at a ratio of three to one. Add to this: fifteen Catholic girls and nine Catholic men married without asking for the dispensation. Out of the 158 marriages that were entered into after obtaining the dispensation, forty-three Catholics abandoned the practice of their faith at the ratio of four girls to one man. Thirty-six per cent of the children of mixed marriage are not being brought up in the Catholic Faith. Here again, statistics show conditions more favorable in the cases where the father is a Catholic. Unhappily, this priest gave no report or figures as to the converts resulting from these 158 unions of Protestant and Catholic.

Another experienced parish priest states the following conditions: — seventy-four Catholic men of his parish had married Protestant women, thirty-two of whom became Catholic. One hundred and four Catholic girls married Protestant men, twenty-one of whom became Catholic. In seventeen of these families of mixed marriage, the agreements are not kept, and the Catholic party had given up the practice of religion, at least in public.

Another zealous priest presents this report: 133 couples

approached him on the subject of mixed marriage; in 106 cases he succeeded in receiving the Protestant party into the Church before marriage, and nineteen joined the Church later; eight of those Catholics who married with the dispensation, gradually drifted away. Outside the above number, twenty-two Catholics married Protestants without dispensation, none of the number have so far been reconciled with the Church.

The author has been for many years in parish work, for the most part in districts where Catholics are scarce and scattered; he had a number of mixed marriages on which he draws. In twenty-four cases the man was a Catholic, and in thirty-four cases, the bride was a Catholic. A careful review reveals that nineteen of the Protestants became Catholics, that four Catholics apostatized, and that the others seem to practice their religion and respect the conditions of agreement signed prior to marriage. Of several, we could not say they are fervent Catholics, but as far as that goes, there are many other cases where both parties are Catholic and neither are they fervent. Also, there are twelve Catholics who have married outside the Church, and who, excepting two of the cases who renewed their consent, are now beyond the pale of the Church.

It would indeed be very interesting to know the exact figures for the whole world, or even for our own country in this regard. But after all what would those figures prove? Only that which everybody knows: that mixed marriage is a menace to the Faith, and that while there are many conversions, generally speaking, the losses are

numerically greater. Let us find a media via between the rigorist and the laxist. The former speaks as if all the losses of the Church were due to mixed marriage. Is this a fact? Under the heading of "Stray Sheep," we shall enumerate a long list of reasons why people leave the Church; a faithful census taker substantiates our findings that a larger number of fallen-away Catholics are lost through a variety of reasons rather than from mixed marriage. In many cases, the pastor will find the Protestant party much more favorably inclined toward the Church than the Catholic husband, and the author knows of more than one case where a sincere Protestant wife brought the lukewarm Catholic husband back to his duties by becoming a Catholic herself.

The main drawback lies in this: many Catholics who keep company with Protestants are not of a high religious caliber, and hold their faith very lightly. These are usually of the number who have never attended a Catholic school, whose Catholic knowledge is so scant that they do not feel at home in Catholic circles; men or women, who have never read anything Catholic, and who would be pleased if others would forget that they really are Catholic at all. Such persons lack the stamina to make sacrifices for religion and for their faith; therefore, they do not stand the test when the Church says, "Thou shalt not." If refused a dispensation, they will without hesitation go to a magistrate or a preacher; then they and their children will assuredly be lost to the Church. On the other hand, if you marry them, and keep in pastoral contact with them, you may gradually win their good will

and save them, something that could not be done by prohibitive tactics.

The most forceful argument in favor of refusing dispensations *in toto* is the complaint of the ease with which dispensations are granted, or the carelessness with which they are sought. It is shocking to think that priests should take the matter so lightly as to endanger the very validity of the marriage in spite of the dispensation granted by the Bishop. Where does the fault lie? Certainly not in the Chancery, nor in the Bishop. They ask for *causae* and insist on the proper canonical procedure. Very few Bishops will grant a dispensation per telephone; many forbid their pastors to apply by telegraph; and if the priest come himself to ask for the dispensation, he is invariably required to put his application in writing. In each individual case, the Bishop must depend altogether upon the conscientious presentation of the matter by the pastor who is supposed to know the parties concerned; it is his duty to state the reasons and circumstances, supported by his own honest conviction.

To stem the flood of mixed marriage, more is required than simply to announce in church that henceforth no more dispensations will be issued under any conditions. We read of some priests who rarely ever officiate at a mixed marriage; their method is different from the one above. They begin by giving their children a good Catholic education, and point out to them from the very beginning the dangers arising from keeping company with non-Catholics and irreligious people. They try to segregate their parishioners socially by maintaining par-

ish clubs, and by furnishing parochial entertainments, knowing that young people who grow up together in Catholic relations will not go out of their own religious zone to select a partner for life. If one or another among their young people manifest an inclination for company-keeping with outsiders, the pastor warns them and warns the parents, making use of his authority in the confessional to point out the dangers of the proposed step. If in spite of all his precautions and care, a couple present themselves before him for mixed marriage, the priest will strive to win the good favor of the Protestant, give him as much instruction as possible, study his dispositions towards the Catholic Church, and in the most cases, if the conversion does not precede the wedding, it follows soon after. As desirable as it is that the conversion take place before marriage, there are, nevertheless, many instances where it is better to wait, as is often the case with a Protestant girl, who wishing to become a Catholic before her marriage to a Protestant, cannot carry out her purpose as long as she is dependent upon her people for a home. Seldom do the candidates present themselves in time to allow leisurely instruction and preparation for baptism; in most cases, the author has found the conversion more satisfactory, if it followed the marriage rather than preceded it. A marriage cannot always be postponed, but in the matter of conversion, the longer the preparation, and the more thorough the instructions, the better.

In the controversy about mixed marriage, some of the opinions submitted suggested that a dispensation should

never be granted to a Catholic man, because it will be easier for him to find a proper wife among his own class, and more especially because the mother is the natural educator of the child; therefore, with a Protestant mother in the house, the Catholic education of the children would be highly improbable, if not impossible. This argument sounds reasonable enough, yet statistics show the opposite. The evils resulting from mixed marriage are much greater in cases where the woman is the Catholic; and in the same proportion, conversions are more numerous when the man is a Catholic. There is a psychological reason for this. A woman is more susceptible to religious influence, than is a man. If a Catholic husband practices his religion and goes to church regularly, his wife is so well impressed that she yearns to be one with him in the vital matter of Faith. If on the other hand, the Catholic wife is most zealous in her religious observances, her husband sees nothing unusual in her piety, thinking it but natural that a woman must have religion. He lets it go at that.

A priest who took the census in his parish made it a special point to inquire into the causes of church defection; he tells us that in comparatively few cases did he find the defection due to the interference of the non-Catholic party; the real cause of apostasy usually lay with the Catholics themselves. In the case of defection with those of mixed marriage, the Catholic party has probably been careless in religious matters before marriage; in such a case, the marriage itself is but an added factor that leads to apostasy, and probably hastens it.

Again: the Catholic may be sincere and faithful; then we find the agreements are conscientiously kept; in seven cases out of ten, the Protestant party will sooner or later become a Catholic. I cannot subscribe to the correspondent who writes: "Those who remain faithful and finally win over the Protestant party are a mighty poor compensation for the vastly larger number that fall by the wayside." In matters of genuine Christianity, I prefer to judge by quality rather than by quantity.

In computing the losses sustained through dispensations for mixed marriage, two points are often overlooked. First, how many would simply marry before a magistrate or minister, thus automatically severing their connection with the Church, if the dispensation were withheld? In such cases, both the parents as well as the children would surely be lost to the Church, for we must know that reconciliation and the sanation of the bond are rare, comparatively speaking. Second, suppose you refuse to apply for a dispensation, and they marry *coram magistrato aut ministello*, and later return to you to be reconciled with the Church? You cannot refuse them the pardon of the Church, if they show a willingness to do penance and abide by the punishment the Church metes out to them. Consequently, a dispensation is obtained for them *post factum et peccatum*, the very dispensation which was refused them before they had done wrong. Is this not putting a premium on breaking the law of the Church? How many apathetic Catholics would avail themselves of this loophole to slip into mixed marriage?

The reader is not to think for a moment that we favor mixed marriages. If we thought the evil could be mitigated, or wiped out by the stroke of the pen, the writer would be the first to take the action; but we have too much cause to believe that in this matter, as in certain other prohibitive measures, the cure would be worse than the malady. Therefore, instead of making the marriage law more stringent, let us enlighten the conscience of our people. Let us blunt the appetite for the forbidden fruit, so they will cease to desire it; let us apply some useful remedy. Then if in spite of our warnings and exhortations, young people will ask us to unite them in the bond of mixed marriage, let us proceed with the utmost prudence and kindness. Our work lies then with the Protestant more than with the Catholic. Probably he is ignorant of Catholic doctrine, has never spoken with a priest, and has been raised in fear and prejudice against us. A stern, cold manner, a facial expression indicative of contempt for his ignorance or his belief, the slightest ridicule of his convictions, may embitter him from the beginning against the Catholic Faith, and retard his conversion if, indeed, it does not frustrate it entirely.

If we bewail the evils of mixed marriage, let us also examine ourselves as to how many of the fallen away we are responsible for. "To him who knoweth to do good, and doth it not, to him it is sin." ¹

¹ Jas., iv, 17.

-- XVIII --

STRAY SHEEP

"And he said to me: Son of man, dost thou think these bones shall live? And I answered: O Lord God, thou knowest. And He said to me: Prophesy concerning these bones, and say to them: Ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. Thus saith the Lord God to these bones: Behold, I will send spirit into you, and you shall live." (Ezech. xxxvii, 3-5.)

WHEN we speak of the priest's duty toward "Other Sheep," we are speaking not only of those whose forefathers lived outside the Church for centuries, or those who have never had any affiliation with Catholicity under any form or name; there are others who have deliberately severed their connection with the Church either within our own observation, or within the memory of our contemporaries. This class is known under various names; such as, apostates, renegades, back-sliders, stray sheep, and sometimes referred to as ought-to-be's. The name of the parish that has no such class is Utopia.

Several years ago an Archbishop of the Middle West ordered a census in his diocese; this census was to include not only those known to be Catholics, such as pew-renters and regular communicants, but also every man and woman known to have been baptized according to the Roman Rite. The census taker was to be either the pastor himself or his assistant, or a reliable layman. The following questions were to be asked of each delinquent church-goer: When did you cease going to church? How

long is it since you received the Sacraments? What is the reason for your neglect? Did you join any Protestant denomination? Do you expect ever to return to the Church? If you thought you were dying, would you call for a priest?

The result of this census was amazing so far as the number of the fallen-away is concerned. We select as an illustration the findings of the census-taker in a small country town, with a predominant rural congregation of something beyond six hundred souls. It was found that in addition to that number, there were one hundred thirty who did not practice their faith. Some of them did not even know whether or not they had been baptized and resented the very idea of belonging to us. Others, for the most part offspring of mixed marriage, having lost the Catholic parent, lost also Catholic training and education. Some admitted that they "just naturally drifted away," first slackening in the reception of the Sacraments, and finally dropping out altogether. The Catholic school in its earlier stage had not been an asset, as the lay teachers in turn were sometimes addicted to drink, or were cruel in maintaining discipline. Rarely were the teachers exemplary Catholics and some priests who had served in this parish left the religious instruction in the hands of such instructors.

Some had married outside the Church and, barred from the Sacraments, were too proud to ask for pardon and perform the public penance imposed at that day for the offense. A few had joined forbidden societies as a means to succeed better in business or politics. Quite a round

number declared they had been insulted by a priest, or by the church trustees who had sent them urgent demands for delinquent pew rent. Some gave up Church when the pastor asked for their resignation as trustees, or informed them their services in the choir could be dispensed with. The pastor came in for most of the blame, for publicly rebuking them when they came late for Mass, or when they took their place in the rear, or in the vestibule, instead of occupying pews. Others felt grievously wounded because their advice was not asked in regard to construction of parish buildings, or because some contract had been awarded rival firms. In some instances, the serious break came when the pastor refused a relative Christian burial, or spoke rather freely of the deceased in his funeral oration. Only two or three of the fallen-away Catholics had actually joined a Protestant church and attended services there with some regularity. Others tried to justify themselves by hinting that "they knew too much," and others again said quite plainly they "did not believe in confession."

To the question: "Would you wish the priest to come to you if you thought you were dying?" the answers are the most important for the pastor's point of view. It is significant that several expressed themselves as ready to return to the practice of their religious duties at once; "they had been thinking about it for some time and were only waiting for a special occasion to make their peace with God." Others said they would come back "later"; more than half the number, wanted the priest to come to them when there was danger of death, while

others said "he could come if he wished to come." But very few of the number declared they did no longer believe in the Catholic religion "and that there was no use to bother them."

These answers are valuable in showing the main preventive to the curse of apostasy: Catholic Education. Not only the gathering of our Catholic children in the parochial school, or in boarding schools, but Catholic education for the adults of our parish by simple, plain, regular, interesting and instructive preaching; by personal contact, good example, friendly visits, salutary guidance through the confessional, and the encouragement of good reading. Knowledge of their religion and the faithful and affectionate practice of it must be made the very heart of our people, the atmosphere in which they breathe, and move and live. Superficiality in knowledge leads to laxity in morals from which springs indifference in practice of faith. Catholics need Catholic companionship. Non-Catholic companionship, as a rule, causes a change in the principles that actuate the Catholic and is marked by a gradual lowering in ideals, and a cooling in fervor, so that soon they seem to feel no compunction for disobeying the Church. As soon as a Catholic begins to show disrespect for his Church, or criticises it, he becomes a prospective member of the class of the fallen-away.

All instructions should be given in a most kind and charitable manner. The best intentions are unproductive of good unless carried out with tact and prudence. The writer knows a pious priest, now well advanced in years,

who preached on every conceivable opportunity of the evils of Mixed Marriage. Possibly, he prevented some such marriages; we do not know. But it is a well established fact that several fairly good Catholics left the Church for what they styled "his incessant nagging," for they themselves had married non-Catholics. They were living up to their agreement, their children were being brought up in the Catholic faith, hence these people felt sorely wronged by being made the continual object of public excoriation, and gradually they gave up Church going.

The author calls to mind the case of a German who had married a Lutheran woman and had ceased to practice his faith. When approached by the priest, this man was embarrassed, and referred the priest to his wife that she explain why they did not keep their promises of having the children baptized. This is what the woman had to say: When their first baby was born they lived miles from the nearest Catholic mission, but within a month, they travelled over the rough roads of the northern Alabama coal mining region to have their first-born baptized. When the priest saw her at Mass, he undertook to convert her at once by preaching a sermon on the One True Church outside of which there is no salvation; his argument culminated in the statement that the "Catholic Church is the living tree, and the Protestant Churches are but dead and rotten branches, cut off from the main trunk." Now, of course, this is sound Catholic doctrine, and had been preached fifteen hundred years ago by the great Bishop of Hippo; but was it prudent or

charitable to hurl this terrific charge into the face of an unlettered bona fide Protestant woman, who had come to bring her child to Mother Church for baptism, in obedience to the promises she had made when married? It certainly had disastrous effects, for she declared to her husband upon their return home, that never again would she set foot within a Catholic church. Her husband was of the easy-going type, and followed the line of least resistance. The result was that none of the other five children were baptized.

It is sad enough that so many factors conspire to draw our sheep from the fold; at least, should the priest use every precaution lest his imprudent zeal, or his want of charity and consideration cause the loss of an immortal soul. Let the pastor feed his sheep with true doctrine, watch their steps, warn them against lurking dangers, and like a good shepherd, keep the wolf from the fold. We have said elsewhere that mixed marriage is an unavoidable evil; since therefore, we shall certainly have to deal with it, let us use now every precaution against it by giving the families of such marriages our most solicitous care; just as a mother watches with more anxiety over her sickly child than over the other children who have robust health.

Sometimes the very selfishness and jealousy of the pastor drives the lambs away. He will never call another priest to preach, rarely gives his penitents an opportunity for a change of confessor, permits years to flow by without mission, retreat, or triduum. He says he is quite capable of taking care of his own parish. The parishioners, how-

ever, do not share this opinion; and doubtless many a sinner is kept from the Sacraments, or in certain other cases, persons are plunged into the abyss of sacrilegious confessions and Communions. This is no scare statement, as is proven by the fact that as soon as a missionary, or a visiting priest hears confessions in such a parish, then some black sheep who for years have not darkened the church door, present themselves at the tribunal of mercy to be reconciled to God. Who has not noticed that when a change takes place in a parish, e.g., the coming of a new pastor, that stray Catholics begin coming back to their duty. The prophet must have had such selfish pastors in mind, when he said: "Therefore, thus saith the Lord the God of Israel to the pastors that feed my people: You have scattered my flock, and driven them away"¹; but now: "Prophesy concerning these bones and say to them: Ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord,"² as the Lord said to Ezechiel.

Who is there that is not aware of such dry bones in his own congregation? Let us hope that our conscience will not tell us that such are without life and spirit through our own carelessness or lack of love. How shall we proceed to lead the "other sheep" back so there will be one flock and one shepherd? Our Lord gives us the answer, "Ego sum pastor bonus." A good shepherd, He says — knows his own and they know him, and he will give his very life for his sheep. And should one of them be lost, he actually leaves the ninety-nine in the fold and goes after the lost sheep in the wilderness, and having found it,

¹ Jerem., xxiii, 21.

² Ezech., xxxvii, 4.

picks it up tenderly and brings it back rejoicing to the fold, because "He rejoiceth more for that, than for the ninety-nine that went not astray?"¹

In learning this lesson from our Divine Master, we must bear in mind that this care of the flock is a constant care, that we are not to wait five or ten years before we go out soul-saving through the medium of mission or census. The most effective way of working for the conversion of a fallen-away Catholic is the taking of a census, or rather, the house-to-house canvass, not so much for the purpose of regulating the pew rent and organizing a better form of finances in the parish, but rather to learn the real condition of the parish, so far as spiritual matters are concerned. In meeting people face to face, and securing information by personal observation, the census-taker will have limitless facilities for bringing back the older fallen-away to the Sacraments, to lead the young to Catholic influence, to bring to an end bad companionship and dangerous flirtations, to introduce Catholic literature into homes, to induce parents to send the children to the parochial school, and to church for First Communion instructions. Let the priest visit every house where he is told there may be found a fallen-away Catholic. In every house, he should ask about Mass, Holy Communion, company-keeping, Catholic reading matter, school attendance, etc.; he will soon realize that he is on a mission tour, not simply taking the parish census! He would indeed be a poor shepherd if he did not recognize the vast possibility of the occasion,

¹ Matt., xviii, 13.

and understand more fully the words of the Prophet: "Vos dispersistis gregem meum, et eiecistis eos, et non visitastis eos."¹ "Propterea, pastores, audite verbum Domini . . . neque enim quaesierunt pastores mei gregem meum, sed pascebant pastores semetipsos, et greges meos non pascebant."²

Taking the census in the manner here indicated is not a task for every three or five years, to be completed within two to three weeks. It will be most profitable and will do the most good to keep at it constantly, setting aside certain days of the week for a house to house mission. Regular visits to others than close personal friends and faithful members, will prove a source of enlightenment to the pastor, for he will hear things, and see things which otherwise he would never have known. As a rule, he will find in the fallen-away home, a spirit of antagonism, always anxious to justify neglect by counter-complaints. Such people will tell the priest what they do not like about his administration, his sermons, his general conduct. He will hear much gossip, not necessarily damning, but interspersed with sufficient truth to make him examine his conscience and to show him the necessity of more kindness and prudence in his future activities.

Canon 1349 of the Codex Juris Canonici states: "Ordinarii advigilent ut, saltem decimo quoque anno, sacram, quam vocant, missionem, ad gregem sibi commissum parochi curent." While these missions in the first place have the purpose to renew spiritual fervor of the faithful, the second object must be to reclaim the

¹ Jerem., xxiii, 1.

² Ezech., xxxiv, 8.

strayed and lost. The Canon says "saltem"; at least every ten years. But the good pastor will not be satisfied with the *least* he can do, especially, after he has found out through the census that a large number of the fallen-away in his parish have a real, or an imaginary grievance against him. He will be eager to avail himself of the zeal and skill of missionaries to help him in the great undertaking of "restaurare omnia in Christo." To make success doubly sure, he will do well to give the missionaries full liberty to go after the fallen-away; in fact, he should make this a condition from the start. Many a mission falls short of results because the missionaries are afraid to go out among the people lest they displease the pastor; while the pastor, secretly bewails the inertia of the missionaries who make no special effort to bring the erring back to Mother Church. A practical way of avoiding misunderstandings and to insure good results, is to furnish the superior of the mission with a list of the names of those who are non-practicing Catholics; do this at the beginning of the mission, so the Fathers can arrange a systematic Drive for sinners. The daily sermons, the many confessions and Holy Communions, special devotions, and the extra prayers said within the time of the mission, will make of it a time of extraordinary grace when the hardened hearts are softened, and even the most obdurate sinner listens to the voice of the good shepherd. For the Lord said: "I will save my flock and it shall no more be a spoil."¹ Of negligent pastors the Lord said: "If they stood in my counsel, and had made

¹ Ezech., xxxiv, 22.

my words known to my people, I should have turned them from their evil way, and from their wicked doings.”¹

The author of the Life of St. John of the Cross has this to say of the effects of missions:

“The fruits of a mission are often counted by the crowds that attend it, by the fervor it leaves behind, and the perpetual good works which it starts; but only to the God of secrets are its real fruits properly known. How many a seared conscience is then made whole, how many an outcast from the Church is then restored to its bosom, how many a soul on the road to perdition is then put upon the way of salvation. These wonders shall be seen in their entirety only on the Last Day.”

The priest to whom is entrusted the care of souls should “look diligently, lest any man be wanting to the grace of God”² and let him “know that he who causeth a sinner to be converted from the error of his way, shall save his own soul from death, and shall cover a multitude of sins.”³ “With modesty admonishing them that resist the truth; if peradventure God may give them repentance to know the truth, and they may recover themselves from the snares of the devil, by whom they are held captive at his will,”⁴ “and they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graft them in again.”⁵

¹ Jerem., xxiii, 22.

² Hebr. xii, 15.

³ Jas. v, 20.

⁴ II Tim., ii, 25, 26.

⁵ Rom., xi, 23.

-- XIX --

LAY APOSTOLATE

"Who is a wise man, and endued with knowledge among you? Let him shew by a good conversation his work in the meekness of wisdom."

(James, iii, 13.)

WHILE calling certain men to preach the Gospel, Our Lord permitted others to spread the kingdom in a private way; as for example, in the case of the Samaritan woman who hastened back to town and brought her relatives and friends to listen to the Saviour. Again: he permitted the blind and the sick, cured of their ailments, to announce His power all over the district. When St. Peter reached the home of Cornelius, he found not only that man's family, but also his friends and neighbors had been assembled to receive the Gospel.¹ The Prince of the Apostles was assisted by lay friends also, for we read: "In Joppe autem fuit quaedam discipula, nomine Tabitha, quae interpretata dicitur Dorcas. Haec erat plena operibus bonis, et eleemosynis quas faciebat."²

So with St. Paul: in the course of his many travels and visits to mission centers, the Great Apostle had occasion to appreciate the coöperation of pious men and women who not only provided him with shelter and lodging, but also brought neophytes to him for baptism, having instructed them privately in their own houses in the essential doctrines of Christianity. In Caesarea he abode

¹ Cf. Acts, x, 24.

² Acta Apost., ix, 36.

in the house of Philip, an evangelist, who had four daughters who were virgins and prophesied.¹ Evidently, they were catechists, who like Lydia of the neighborhood of Philippi entertained the Apostle; these pious women made their homes into mission centers. A girl who had a pythical spirit helped in preaching the Gospel by following the Apostles and crying out: "These men are the servants of the most High God, who preach unto you the way of salvation."² St. Paul rewarded her for her testimony by driving out the evil spirit from her. It is also evident that these women instructed members of their own sex and in private circles only, for St. Paul writes to the Corinthians³: "*Mulieres in ecclesiis taceant.*" To the Romans, he wrote: "Salute Prisca and Aquila, my helpers in Christ Jesus . . . and the church which is in their house."⁴ When Lydia was converted by St. Paul she brought her household together and they also became Christians, as did the jailer at Philippi, who accepted the faith and brought his whole family with him into the Church. So also did Crispus believe with his whole house. Everywhere did the Apostle have to depend on converts to lead other converts to him. In the absence of duly ordained priests, educated and loyal Christians exercised a sort of vigilance over the flock:

"Now a certain Jew, named Apollo, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, came to Ephesus, one mighty in the scriptures. This man . . . being fervent in spirit

¹ Acts, xxi, 8, 9.

² Acts, xvi, 17.

³ I Cor., xiv, 34.

⁴ Rom., xvi, 3, 5.

spoke and taught diligently the things that are of Jesus, knowing only the baptism of John. This man therefore began to speak in the synagogue, whom when Priscilla and Aquila had heard, they took him to them, and expounded to him the way of the Lord more diligently. And whereas he was desirous to go to Achaia, the brethren exhorting, helped them much who had believed.”¹ More than once does St. Paul exhort the brethren to do missionary work both by word and example: “Let everyone of them please his neighbor unto good, to edification.”²

St. Peter, on the other hand, warns the faithful that in their mutual instruction, they must strictly adhere to the word preached to them by the Apostles. “Understand this first, that no prophecy of scripture is made by private interpretation.”³ For the mere zeal to do good is not a guarantee against error. Every layman, therefore, is not fitted to be a catechist, especially where the questions are difficult and important. St. Peter warned some of them against even the Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans, “in which are certain things hard to be understood, which the unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, to their own destruction.”⁴

How helpful the laity can be to a priest when he is in danger of being drawn into difficulties by an over-zealous impetuosity, is demonstrated by the incident of the tumult caused by the jealous silversmiths of Ephesus.

“The whole city was filled with confusion; and having caught Gaius and Aristarchus, men of Macedonia, Paul’s

¹ Acts, xviii, 24, et seq.

² Rom., xv, 2.

³ II Peter, i, 20.

⁴ Ib., iii, 16.

companions, they rushed with one accord to the theater. And when Paul would have entered in unto the people, the disciples suffered him not. And some also of the rulers of Asia, who were his friends, sent unto him, desiring that he would not venture himself into the theater.”¹ To have appeared before that embittered rabble, would have probably cost the Apostle his life; but the tact and prudence of a simple town clerk quieted the storm with a few words: “And when he had said these things, he dismissed the assembly.”² Many a priest in reading the Acts of the Apostles, finds therein a counterpart of his own experiences: the coöperation of lay friends, their loyalty, experience, and solicitude, their facility of approach to both heretic and infidel whom he himself possibly could not meet, — all this is a source of assistance and protection to him. The priest will, then, do well to look for helpers in his missionary work, and will avail himself of their standing and influence in the community to carry on his work of spreading the Truth.

In every parish there are persons like Priscilla and Aquila who, well versed in religion, may be trusted with the instruction of sincere converts; or others, who like Philip’s daughters, are pillars of strength to the small congregation in the isolated districts, far away from either church or priest. Our pioneer missionaries can tell wonderful tales of the zeal of simple men and women who to this day take the place of the ancient lay evangelist; of those who know everyone in the locality, and who often recognize who will make a good convert when

¹ Acts, xix, 29-31.

² Acts, xix, 40.

instructed, or what may cause the fall of another; they frequently surpass the priest himself in the exercise of this form of zeal. It has been noted, also, that frequently they are the ones who can best suggest the means to employ and the words to use in guiding back him who has left the fold. The author has in mind a Catholic lady who became the founder of a flourishing mission center by asking the Bishop, in the first place, to occasionally send a priest there; then later, by helping the visiting missionary in every way. She gathered young and old for instruction, exhorted them to receive the Sacraments, went after prospective converts, brought back couples that had married outside the Church for reconciliation; she collected the meagre salary of the priest, and finally by working for months, helped collect the funds for the building of a church. Later, there was a Catholic school, and again it was this faithful lady who knew best where to get pupils; she often went for them herself, not only among the Catholics, but she was equally successful among the Protestants, for everybody knew and respected this "mother of the Catholic church."

In every mission, it is probable that one faithful lay apostle may be found, who enjoying a certain degree of leadership can take the pastor's place in externals when the latter is absent: conduct the Sunday school, choir practice, May devotions, Stations of the Cross during Lent, etc.; a man who will notify the scattered Catholics of the coming of the priest, announce to the Protestants when there is to be special service in the mission church, or when there is to be a mission for non-Catholics. These

lay apostles introduce strangers to the priest, letting the Father know in private the beliefs of the strangers, their special attraction to the Church, as well as the pet prejudice of each one, should they have such. . . . Would any priest be so imprudent, so self-sufficient as to say: "I need no help. I have studied my theology, and am quite capable of taking care of my own business?" Some do; and sooner or later, they may have cause to regret their self-sufficiency.

Do you realize that some lay people make more converts than you can make, while you receive the credit of it, at least before men? Why be jealous of the good others do, and thrust aside their services with an air of contempt, as if those converts whose first inspiration came not through you must be necessarily of an inferior type. After all, it is the grace of God that saves souls, and the most zealous missionary as well as the most eloquent preacher, are but tools in His hands.

In the Life of Bishop Ullathorne we find an instance of the efficiency of this lay apostolate. Margaret Mary Hallahan, a simple but pious servant girl, offered her services to him as a social worker among the children and the factory girls of Coventry. She knew everybody in the town and knew also the reasons for the lamentable state of affairs in this Catholic congregation which had formerly been prosperous. Father Ullathorne had just returned from the Australian Missions where he had done yeoman work and solved some almost hopeless entanglements between the Church and the Government; he had even refused the mitre, to devote his energy to the

rebuilding of the Coventry mission. He was humble and wise enough, however, to recognize the value of the services tendered by this poor woman. Nor were his hopes disappointed; she visited the careless Catholics, brought them back to the Church; gathered their children by the hundreds for Christian Doctrine; inaugurated and conducted most successfully a club for factory girls, and for their benefit and that of converts conducted likewise evening schools. Finally being joined by several young women of equal zeal, she founded a Congregation of Dominican Tertiaries.

Besides individual lay apostles, the priest can make use of organized groups, such as Sodalities, Holy Name Societies, Fraternal Orders, etc., to aid him to deal with the burning questions of the missions. In large parishes such organizations will prove an indispensable implement in the taking of the census, distributing Catholic literature, advertising lectures for non-Catholics, and forming committees of protest or for other concerted action when the periodic waves of bigotry sweep the country. The conviction that you have a body of intelligent and faithful helpers, will increase your zeal and courage, and in case of failure, you will not be so utterly alone, nor depressed by futile self-accusation.

In the matter of lay coöperation, one thing must be well understood: the priest must always be the real leader. There must not be lay leadership as far as purely religious or ecclesiastical business is concerned. The priest performs the duties incumbent on him: he preaches the Gospel, administers the Sacraments, and rules the

congregation. Laymen must always be subordinate, never coördinate with him. He may properly take advice from them, and accept their services, but never can he take their orders. They may impart instruction when he himself cannot act, but whenever he is there, it is the duty of the priest to teach catechism and instruct the converts. Even though he have Sisters to teach his parochial school, or the mission school, he must not leave to them exclusively the task of teaching catechism to the little ones. As to the converts: no matter how able a lay instructor he may have associated with him, the priest's study of dogmatic theology, his experience in practical psychology through the confessional, his wide range of learning in religious fields, accumulated by study and preaching, make him a thousand times more competent to train the convert in the true Catholic spirit and in solid religious instruction. The convert is familiar with the divergent opinions of Protestant lay people in religious matters; he is apt to suspect a similar division on tenets among the Catholic laity. But when a priest speaks to him, he feels that the Catholic Church is speaking to him, and his dictum is final.

At the present day we hear and read much about lay leadership. Some hyper-zealous Catholics are apt to misconstrue this term, as if they were called upon to assume leadership in the regime of the Church, or at least share with the clergy and episcopate responsibility in the temporal or spiritual administration. In all ages of the Christian era there have been great leaders of thought and action in the ranks of the laity. There are

Origen, Boethius, Charlemagne, Sir Thomas More, Willibald Pirkheimer, Count de Montalembert, Orestes Brownson, William George Ward, Ozanam, Goerres, Windthorst, and countless others. The Catholic Church is proud of them for the services they have rendered her in her need and for her glory. But when we read their lives, we find that each of them ruled supreme in some certain domain, such as philosophy, statecraft, charity, science, or politics. They never allowed their leadership to conflict with the respect and obedience they owed Mother Church. By their high standing, their fame and influence with the masses, they became pillars of the visible Church of Christ, and they led their followers, not in rivalry with the hierarchy, but under its guidance, thus ably assisting in the great task of Christ's Church on earth, "*Ut omnes unum sint.*"

-- XX --

HARVEST OF SOULS

"The Church, as the common mother of all, has long been calling you back to her; the Catholics of the world await you with brotherly love, that you may render holy worship to God together with us, united in perfect charity by the profession of one Gospel, one Faith, and one Hope." (Pope Leo XIII: "Prael. Gratulationis Publicae," June 20, 1894.)

TRUE to her commission from Christ to go forth and teach all nations, the office of the Catholic Church is not only to conserve, but to expand. The Apostles received the apostolate to become fishers of men. The parable of One Fold and the Other Sheep; that of The King who made the Wedding Feast for his Son, inviting many, and by a second call, urging the masses from the highways and byways to come in; the parable of The Householder, engaging all available labor to be found in the market place, — all these details point to one great duty, one great ambition for the zealous priest: to win sheep into the fold, to catch fish in the net, to call laborers to work in the vineyard of the Divine Householder. Now, every priest considers himself a servant of the King who sent him out to lead guests to the wedding feast. The encouraging words of our Lord here present themselves: "Levate oculos vestros, et videte regiones, quia albae sunt jam ad messem."¹ Every sower of seed looks forward to a rich harvest. Why should not the sower for

¹ Joannes, iv, 20.

the Lord do likewise? It is true, many feel discouraged because the harvest does not promise to be commensurate with the labor involved. Such missionaries seem to think that every sinner should prostrate himself in shame and sorrow; that every heretic should abjure his errors, upon hearing one sermon! But it behooves not the servant to be above his Master. The number of loyal converts that Christ himself had at the time of His death was very small. Yet, how He had preached, with what great miracles had He not substantiated His doctrine! He prepared the way for the Apostles; ten days after Christ's ascension, they could baptize three thousand believers! We thus see that His preaching, His prayers, His good example, His miracles, and the persecutions He endured, were not in vain. Nor are our efforts vain, even if converts are slow to come. Assuredly, we shall have some visible returns for our labor; but what we see, will not be all. We cannot count our converts, because we do not know them all. Many a one has received the first impulse to join the Church from you, but he may have carried out his intention long after you gave the impulse and in another place. The church records do not credit you for that convert, but your Angel keeps a record, and in due time you will receive your reward.

Again: some of your known converts are the means of attracting others to enter the True Fold, and no matter where this may happen, God will credit you as the servant who brought these souls to the wedding feast. Frequently, in the course of missions preached by

eloquent men, converts enter the instruction class who have been drawn thither not so much by the oratory displayed by the visiting missionary, as by the humility, piety, and persevering zeal of the resident pastor. Then let us remember that it is neither the pastor nor the missionary who make the converts, but divine grace, moving and assisting their efforts. It is God Himself who sends the call through us; we are only His voice crying in the desert. But this intermediary work is a most honorable office, one fraught with much happiness. Great will be our delight and surprise when we reach heaven and behold the great number of souls that will meet us and thank us for showing them the way to paradise. Then shall we ask in wonder: "When did I convert you? I never knew you, nor was I ever aware of your presence when I preached the Gospel." And they will tell us: "Whatsoever you did for your own congregation, believers and unbelievers alike, you did for us: we devoured the crumbs that fell from the table."

Do not lose heart, zealous priest; not one of your sermons, not one catechetical instructions, not one word of advice, not one motion of sympathy to erring brethren is thrown away. All will bear fruit in due season.

There has been considerable agitation of the question of convert making, both in clerical reviews and in books. It has been calculated that every priest actually engaged in the cura animarum has less than two converts to his credit for the year. The author has neither time nor the facilities to make a check on these statistics, but he is convinced that even these figures are exaggerated. He

maintains that these figures tell that every priest *receives* two converts into the Church; this does not necessarily imply that his persuasion, his example, or his prayers have brought them to him. Very probably, the cause of conversion lay not in the priest at all, but elsewhere. To make this clearer, let us enumerate a few sources of conversion, the genuineness of which cannot be denied. One of the principal sources of conversion is the Catholic Hospital. The charity of the Sisters, their prayers, added to the fear of death in the patient conspire to make the patient think of the Catholic Church as the best religion in which to die. He witnesses the administration of the Last Sacraments, and the preparations made for a good death. These things preach more forceful sermons than even a St. Paul could preach. The next best stimulant to conversion lies no doubt in the Catholic college and academy, more especially in the boarding schools conducted by our Religious. From this source, the conversions resulting during school age are relatively few; this is due to parental opposition. But in later years, amid the vicissitudes of life, the soul craves for a safe religious guide; then the memories of the truths heard in the class room revert to the mind, and these former pupils find a haven of refuge in the Catholic Church.

Marriage is another factor in the making of converts. Since Catholics and Protestants mix freely in social and business life, marriage engagements between them result naturally. Vigilant priests succeed in reaping a rich harvest of souls from among those who are under the influence of prenuptial love. Many bishops prescribe a

three weeks' course in Catholic doctrine for both parties as a condition of dispensation, whether or not the non-Catholic intends to become a Catholic. I have read of priests who take this instruction so seriously that they very rarely have a mixed marriage; because they succeed in almost every case in receiving the Protestant party into the Church before marriage. Would that all priests were of such a type! There are few occasions more favorable for a good harvest. Sometimes, of course, we have the "broad-minded" type of Catholic who does not wish his bride to join the Church before the marriage, with the consequence that very often she does not enter later. Even with the avowed intention of becoming a Catholic later, it is a serious risk for any Catholic to enter on a mixed marriage. Certainly, there are many conversions resulting from mixed marriage; but the number of miserable unions of unhappiness, discord, loss of faith and neglect of the religious education of the offspring, greatly outweigh the fortunate ones.

Another source of conversion to the Catholic Church is — *horribile dictu!* — the penitentiary and the death chamber. As a rule, we hear only of the conversion of the more noted criminals, but prison chaplains could tell us how great is the number of those who, bereft of all hope in this life, turn hopefully to the religion that offers them forgiveness of sin and life everlasting. We cannot but think, when we hear of the conversion of a condemned murderer, of the blessing it was to him that he was captured and condemned; for the most of those living a life of crime, would continue in it until death, never

thinking of God or of prayer. It is a special grace from above that they are permitted to expiate their crimes by a violent death. The conversion of so many criminals to the Catholic Church is no small contribution to the weight of evidence for her as the True Church.

Outside the sources of conversion just mentioned, it may be well to cite a few cases from the actual experience of the author; this will give us a better understanding of the workings of God's grace which brings so many honest-minded dissenters to become Catholics.

Mrs. D. . . ., at the age of fourteen, read a novel, the heroine of which was a Catholic girl. The young reader resisted all efforts to induce her to join a Protestant church, always pleading that she intended to be a Catholic. Up to that time, she had never seen a Catholic. Ten years later she married a Catholic and joined his Church.

Mrs. I. . . ., at the age of twelve, found a catechism in the garret of her mountain home; it had been left there by a foreign peddler. Her desire to know and to join the Catholic Church was nourished by the repeated reading of this catechism. Her ambition was fulfilled years after, when she married a lukewarm Catholic; she brought him back to the practice of his religion by accepting the Faith herself.

An oil-well driller called on the author and asked for baptism so that he might find greater favor with an Irish Catholic girl in a northern state. When told that he must take instructions before the Sacrament could be administered, he at first hesitated; but ere half an hour

of the first instruction had passed, he showed marked attention. The second time he came, he had mastered a lengthy lesson, and vowed he would now be a Catholic whether or not the girl married him! A few weeks later he appeared deeply moved and begged for an early date for baptism, saying he was afraid to continue working with nitro-glycerin, when he was not yet in the state of grace.

A railroad clerk found a Catholic magazine in the reading room of the local Y. M. C. A. He grew so interested in the Question Box, conducted therein by the late Father Drury, that he soon began attending our Sunday night sermons; later, he was seen at Mass on Sunday mornings also. In the course of a mission for non-Catholics given by a Paulist Father, this young man asked for the waters of regeneration.

Mr. S. . . . had a sister who belonged to the Catholic Church; he was accustomed to drive her to town for Mass. One morning he found it too cold to wait outside, and entered the church to keep warm. The high Mass and sermon inspired him at once with the desire to become a Catholic; in due time, when his instructions were finished, he was received.

Mrs. O. . . . went to the Catholic Church one Sunday to accompany her husband who was a careless Catholic and had married her before a minister. She declared that the solemnity of the Holy Sacrifice and the devotion of the congregation edified her to such an extent that she told herself then: "This is the true Church, and I will join it." A year later, she came to

our Mission for non-Catholics, and was received by the Paulist Father who conducted the Mission, and she also brought her husband back to his religious duty.

Judge B. . . ., a Methodist and a Mason, lived in a small town with his Catholic wife; this town was visited occasionally by a priest. The judge enjoyed the company of the priest, and they would sit up late into the night, discussing Catholic matters of faith and discipline. Suddenly, the judge fell ill, and finding himself in danger of death, he asked for a priest, renounced Masonry, abjured heresy and received the comforts of the Catholic religion, and died a most edifying death.

Mr. R. . . . was a prosperous merchant without any special church affiliation, though his wife and children were Catholics. As he grew older, he was quite punctual in attending our Sunday night services, and was also often present for High Mass on Sundays. On a business trip to New York he contracted pneumonia, and though alone in that great city, he asked for a priest, joined the Church, and died a holy death.

A man of B. . . . had been brought up in prejudice against Catholicity in every form. Later he moved with his wife and four children to St. Louis where he was a street car conductor. Years later, he returned to B. . . . and everybody was surprised to find him a fervent Catholic. He said he lived in a Catholic neighborhood and carried many passengers on his car on both morning and evening runs. He said he had never seen a class of people better behaved in his life, and begun by revising some earlier impressions concerning them. One thing especially

impressed him favorably: when the car passed a church, the men doffed their hats, and the women made the sign of the cross. One night he told his wife that he was going to call on a priest and place himself under instruction. She told him she had come to the same conclusion, due to contact with her Catholic neighbors. They went to the priest, sent their children to the parochial school, and six weeks later the whole family were Catholics.

Mr. M. . . . was a professor in a Protestant college. The study of history and religion caused him to become interested in the Catholic Church. He came to the author every week for instruction, driving twenty miles on cold winter mornings. He brought his parents and brother and sister for services, but he did not want them to take instructions, wishing to reconnoiter the field, so to say, at first by himself. He underwent heroic struggles before he could make up his mind to take the decisive step, but finally grace conquered human considerations. Soon after his own reception into the Church, he had the happiness to see his two brothers, and later, his sister follow him into the fold. His parents are still holding off; but as they come to Mass at regular intervals, there is hope that grace will unite them, too, in the same Faith.

Sometimes, when speaking of converts, certain of our brother priests ask ironically: "Well, suppose you do make so many converts: how many of them will stick?" This is quite a natural and sensible question, and must be answered honestly. As a rule, we are proud to say that our converts are a credit to the Church, and in some cases far surpass in fervor the Catholics born in the

Faith. This is, of course, as it should be. The Catholics that have grown up in the Church are used to her blessings and treasures, accepting them as a matter of course, like children of wealthy parents who are often indifferent to the riches with which fortune has favored them; but those who have acquired riches later, enjoy them and appreciate them differently. So, Protestants who remember the emptiness of their former spiritual life and compare it now with the bountiful blessings of their new Mother, are prone to be deeply and expansively grateful and appreciative. It is true, too, that often the novelty of the experience is an element to be counted in the newly converted when we consider their spiritual rapture. This can happen when a conversion has not rested on the bedrock of sincerity. What is that? It shows itself, for example, when the conversion was a condition of a desirable marriage; or again, in the case of immature young people who are sometimes received into the Church while in boarding schools. The same thing may happen when for one reason, or another, the instructions given were inadequate as to time and clarity. In all such cases, the convert may be likened to the seed that fell upon stony ground: they stand for a while, but in time of temptation, they fall away.

It is not such a simple thing to prepare souls for a step that will cause violent disturbance in their temporal and social positions. Their conversion must therefore be based on a foundation solid enough to ensure courage and perseverance even under the most trying ordeals. Ill-advised friends, the world, and the devil; family

sentiment and parental solicitude, together with a certain Protestant instinct, not entirely eradicated, but lulled by superficial instruction, can marshal an array of formidable temptations to test the fortitude of the new comer into the Church. When we add to these things, the aloofness of some Catholics who do not understand the difficulties of converts, and who do so little to make these newly born of Christ feel at home, you may easily see the reason for the relapse of a certain proportion of the converts. Where instruction has been thorough, given with true pastoral zeal and prudence, and especially where these instructions are founded on sincere prayer, the conversion will be a genuine one, and will stand the test that even the faith of the most loyal old Catholic could meet, and stand it unwaveringly.

How are we to proceed with the instruction of converts? Religious reviews are full of advice and suggestions, and there are a number of books to help the priest in this most important work. For his own part, the author does not read these books when he begins to instruct a convert, but studies the prospective convert. Who is he? Is he sincere? What is the degree of his education; what his mental capacity for grasping spiritual matters? What are his particular difficulties, and what will be the trials he will have to contend with, and the obstacles to overcome, when he will have changed his religion? After you have directly, or indirectly answered this questionnaire, you will be equipped to act as a safe guide to him on the quest of Faith. Go through the ordinary catechism thoroughly and slowly. You will soon read the

signs when his faith or his intellect balks at a difficulty. You cannot be too thorough on the subject of Original Sin and Baptism, nor too discreet in regard to the Sacrament of Penance. But the real test of Catholicity is the Holy Eucharist. Engrave this sacred mystery deep in his soul, and you will have a convert who will remain true; whatever future doubts and difficulties he may encounter, he will sacrifice them all to the Divine Presence of the Christ of the Eucharist.

It has been an unfailing experience of the author, extending over more than thirty years in the divine ministry, that the doctrine of the Eucharist once mastered, all difficulties end: it may be likened to a great sea which finally crossed, the coast is clear, and the harbor smiling and ready.

A matter not to be overlooked is the creating of the Catholic atmosphere about the converts. Everything is so strange to them. Our phraseology: they must learn to speak the Catholic language. Then they must be trained to think as Catholics; they must enter into the Catholic social life, they must read Catholic literature. Teach them how to use a prayer book, how to say the beads. Take them into the sacristy and show them the vestments and the chalice, and tell them the name of each object or article. They crave to understand the liturgy. Take them through the church, and name everything for them: main altar, side altar, tabernacle, sanctuary lamp, communion railing, the Stations of the Cross, and any statuary, mentioning the special works of the Saints. Show them how the confessional is constructed; practice

taking holy water with them; make the genuflections with them. These things look little to us, but to the convert, they take on great proportions. Do not let them find out such matters for themselves; you can make their coming in so much easier, if you show them around in their new home. If time permits, it is my plan to insist that they read a few Catholic books, not necessarily spiritual ones: histories, biographies, novels. These books will familiarize them with Catholic life and thought, and will teach a thousand interesting details that an old Catholic would not even think of mentioning.

It is very important to keep in touch with the newly-converted; oftentimes their very perseverance hinges on it. Have a constant regard for them, and show them more consideration than to your regular flock: just as in the case of the lamb lost and found, let them be the objects of your tenderest solicitude.

The making of converts calls for sincere interest and sympathy towards them. A conversion is a gradual process and requires time. At the same time, we can save ourselves much anxiety and some humiliation, if we do not permit ourselves to grow too enthusiastic when inquirers come to find out something concerning our faith or teachings. Curiosity and grace are two very different things; and even the grace of faith, and coöperation with that grace are far apart. "Many are called but few are chosen." Alban Stoltz, in a letter to a friend telling of some disappointments he had experienced, incidently in connection with hoped-for-converts, writes: "Lately it has become clearer to me than ever before that a great

majority of Protestants who like us and are pleased with the Church, after all never get across the threshold of the Catholic Church. The main principle of Protestantism is independent Bible reading and interior inspiration. This is the pride of the spirit, and this evil is innate in man, like so many other evil inclinations. The principle of Catholicism, on the other hand, is obedience and submission of our intelligence to all dogmatic truths, and to the authority of the Church. This requires humility. To arrive at this, the every-day Protestant needs a special conversion for which a special grace is necessary. He may possess a complete conviction of the truths and claims of the Church, and still the grace of Faith may be lacking. Therefore prayer is the main and most important thing."

The following account written by a sincere convert to the author is reproduced in its entirety, to permit us to look into the soul that struggles for freedom from the fetters of heresy, and yearns for the peace of the True Faith. This man had been under the instruction of the author, but before he was ready to be received into the Church, he had found it necessary to move to a neighboring city where he finally reached the goal. He writes:

"I had a hard struggle to undergo, as I found it very hard to break away from my former attachments. I had arranged to have the Sacrament of Baptism conferred on me on the Saturday following Easter, having completed my instructions before the close of Lent. However, as the time approached, I felt much worried about becoming a Catholic, although I was convinced of the Truth. I

informed Father W. . . . that perhaps it would be better to wait a while so that I could give the matter a more serious deliberation. For a while, I thought that I could give up the idea of becoming a Catholic, but no sooner had I done this than I was worried much worse and went about in continual fear lest I might die and lose my soul. When I thought of becoming a Catholic, the fear haunted me that I might break away later from the Faith and endanger my soul. I went back to Protestant churches, particularly the Methodist, which I had been accustomed to, but could gain no peace from them. I felt better during the service, but as soon as I left the place of worship, I was as badly off as ever. I consulted a Methodist minister who advised me that I could best find Christ where I had lost Him, and said that he did not think I would find peace in the Catholic Church.

“The matter of what I should do weighed so heavily upon my mind that I found myself entirely incapacitated to perform my daily work. Finally, feeling that there was nothing else to do, and realising that I had all to gain and nothing to lose in taking the contemplated step, I returned to Father W. . . . and explained the situation and the difficulties with which I was burdened. I told him that I believed that I was fully convinced of the truth of the Catholic Faith, but feared it might be only a mental conviction and not spiritual or divine, for I could not understand why there were so many apparently good people outside the fold of the Church, as her doctrines seemed to me so clear and so reasonable that I did not see how people could reject them. Father ex-

plained to me that if I had a strong mental conviction, I possessed everything necessary to become a Catholic, and that I should make the step, if I was anxious to do the right thing. He explained that I would receive the gift of Faith in Baptism and other graces that would strengthen me. However, at the time, I only half believed of what he said, yet to-day I feel quite different and the effects of the Sacrament far surpassed everything that I had thought of.

“Before I left, I told Father that I thought within a few days I would settle my mind and have holy Baptism conferred. Eight or ten days later I went back and told Father that I was ready to become a Catholic. So the following Saturday was set for my reception. The next morning, fears and doubts assailed my mind and I regretted what I was about to do. I banished them, but they came back frequently during the day in spite of my efforts. On the day of my baptism, I went back to Father and asked him whether he thought I ought to go on under the condition with my mind so disturbed? He said that he thought it was only due to a struggle between the natural and the supernatural. But that did not satisfy me, and I was not able to say whether I would go through with it, neither could I say that I would not. He told me to go to the church and pray until three o’clock, when the children were to come for instructions, and I might know by then what to do. I had an hour and went to church and prayed harder than I ever prayed before. Gradually the difficulty seemed to lighten, and before three o’clock I was convinced that it was God’s

will that I become a convert and when Father asked me for my decision, I told him I was ready to receive Baptism. Arrangements were at once made and the Sacrament administered at seven P.M. and I was received into the Church. I went to confession and the next morning received Holy Communion. Strange to say, I have had no more doubts or difficulties about religion; every day I live I seem to be more strongly convinced that I have taken the right step. My mind is now absolutely clear and I have perfect peace and satisfaction. I can come to no other conclusion but that my fortunate condition is due entirely to the grace that I received in the Sacraments. I have now no fear of not being able to live as a Catholic ought to, if I am faithful in receiving the Sacraments frequently."

The sentiments of this severely tried convert are a reflection of the sentiments and feelings of the three thousand converts of the First Christian Pentecost. We read of them in the Acts of the Apostles: "And continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they took their meat with gladness and simplicity of heart: praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord increased daily together such as should be saved." ¹

¹ Acts, ii, 46, 47.

-- XXI --

PERSEVERANCE AND REWARD

"I have been the instrument of the conversion of some Protestants, and indeed, had I but snatched one soul from the way of perdition and restored it to the Catholic Church, I should be amply rewarded."

(Prince Gallitzin to his mother.)

PATIENCE and perseverance are guarantees of ultimate success. Mission work is no exception to this rule, on the contrary, its fruits depend altogether on the virtue of stability. Discouragement is the common cause of failure with many priests who are in charge of small missions, and who do not see their flock increase to keep measure with their holy ambition. In the beginning they are full of zeal, ready to move mountains, expecting to reap while they sow. They forget that ripened fruit is not gathered in May! God has wisely ordained autumn for the harvest; the spring with its youth and freshness and its breath of enthusiasm is for the sowing, while the heat of summer is given over to the care of the growing crops. Of course there is no season that does not bring some returns, but the golden harvest must wait for mature autumn, before the blight of hoary winter ruins the earlier efforts.

And as the farmer lives in hopes while faithfully tending his fields, trusting to the future for worthy remuneration, so must we priests rest in hopes that our work will not be in vain. But in our spiritual work, we have the advantage

over the toiler in the field. In spite of most experienced care, he may meet with failure at harvest time, but there can be no failure for the conscientious priest. He is the hired laborer of the heavenly Householder, and will receive his wages, whether or not his employer reaps a harvest. His wages depend not on converts, on souls saved, although, of course, these add to his glory before the Master. We shall receive our reward at the end of the day, like unto the laborers in the vineyard. The Gospel does not tell us of what value the production of that vineyard was, we are simply told that every laborer received his pay, from the last even to the first. So, too, is the reward for our work assured no matter what the results of our labors may be. In fact, the results of our ministry are for the most part invisible to the human eye. God sees and keeps a record of all. The greatest mission ever preached was preached by Christ himself on the Cross, and yet there were but two converts then: Dismas and the Centurion. But the Blood of Christ irrigated invisibly the souls of millions and faith and salvation came to them.

The task of saving souls differs from bodily labor. When a man digs a ditch, he may turn and see exactly what he has done, how far his work has progressed. Not so with the priest. You may come to a city and find there a beautiful church, a fine residence, and palatial schools. You are told that all this is free of debt. Does this necessarily imply that the pastor is very successful in his labors for the Faith? No; it only shows that he is a fine executive, a good financial manager, and possibly gifted

with an artistic sense of architecture. None of this, however, is an indication that he is a good pastor, a zealous preacher, a charitable confessor, a successful saver of souls.

Many of us are not placed in positions where we can adorn the town with magnificent church edifices; but wherever we may be, we have on hand the material to build to the Lord temples in the souls of our flock. This is a much more sublime achievement than paying off church debts; and though you cannot see immediate results, and even your brother priests may rate you a failure, and the Bishop overlook your name at the next desirable vacancy, still your labors will not have been in vain. There are to your eternal credit: your good example, humble prayer for conversions, zealous preaching and instruction, the spreading of good literature, your kindness, your manly protests, your patient following of stray sheep. Remember, all, all works for good. "*Semper aliquid haeret.*" In your Latin class you learned the axiom: "*Gutta cavat lapidem, non vi, sed semper cadendo.*" Patience and perseverance are the instruments we must always have with us; they alone will lead to final success.

St. Bernard, that great Doctor of the Church, tells us: "Perform thy duty; God will do His share. Plant, sprinkle, and thou hast done thy part. God will give growth where He willeth; and if perhaps, He willeth not, thou hast not lost anything. It is the duty of the physician to apply remedies, but it is not in his hands to give health to the sick." ¹ Christ Himself warns us that

¹ Considerationes, iv, 1.

we must persevere in the work we have once taken upon ourselves: "No man putting his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of heaven."¹ And we are told that the harvest may not be lost because we ourselves do not gather it, for "Alius est qui seminat et alius est qui metit."² St. Chrysostom tries to console us for the seeming barrenness of our ministry when he says: "When God decrees to reward and to remunerate, He usually does not look upon the success of things, but upon the intention of the soul."

It is certain that God makes the converts, not we, the priests, because conversion is a grace and He alone can confer grace. We are the instruments of His love, the channel of His desire for souls. Our zeal must become our second nature; our charity must embrace all, not only those who are of the household of the Faith. Let us not say: "Charity begins at home." That charity that always begins at home rarely leaves home. It is true, you can diffuse goodness, and be useful to outsiders even by staying at home, but our commission is to "go forth." There are no new principles for the conversion of the world, although the means have changed in these days of literature, rapid travel, daily mail, and the radio. The main principle will always be the same; namely, he who has severed his connection with Mother Church through rebellion, can come back to her only through humility and through obedience. The Holy Father has again declared that we must not talk about *reunion*; it must be *submission*. Only that convert who comes back as a

¹ Luke, ix, 62.

² Joannes, iv, 37.

penitent, asking for forgiveness, is a real convert. Unless we plant the virtue of humility in the soul of our candidates, we cannot call them converts. Let us tell them: "Be mindful from whence thou art fallen; do penance, and do the first works." ¹

Never say "What is the use?" That is the language of the weakling. Fortitude is the virtue which the devil fears more than the others. If it is the steady drop that hollows the stone, so it is the steady, regular attention to the one great and sacred aim of life which is crowned with final victory. Oftentimes, a sneer is harder to endure than bloody martyrdom, because there is more humiliation in it. So, too, it is harder to face the daily hardships, the petty disappointments, the loneliness of our position among a hostile, slanderous, and deceiving community, than to blaze a trail for Christianity through the jungles of Africa. But would you distrust the generosity of God who will reward you, not so much for the converts you make as for the efforts you bring? Every drop of your sweat, every throb of heart-ache, every sigh of relief over the returned sheep, every word of truth and admonition, all done for God's sake: an eternal weight of glory!

Remember it is a long night, but there will be a golden dawn. "After the Miserere comes the Gloria; at the edge of the crossed desert, are the green grass and the running water; beyond the salt sea are the delectable islands; April follows the wintry winds; the Passion ended in the Resurrection." ²

¹ Apoc., ii, 5.

² O'Malley: Keystones of Thought.

Monsignor Benson was one day asked what he would do if he received the appointment to the proposed See of Cambridge. He had a variety of schemes for the management of affairs, and especially for the conversion of the Protestants. His friend suggested that he put Jesuits in charge of the proposed new cathedral, but the Monsignor said:

“No; Benedictines!” Then he went on to explain: “Jesuits set out to convince Protestants, and the Cambridge intellectuals are much too stupid to be convinced. Jesuits use Catholicism like a rapier, and the effect on the Protestants, though very unpleasant, isn’t lasting. Now, Benedictines would begin by taking no notice of Cambridge at all, but would compel attention by their calm, dignified, and beautiful ceremonial. With them Catholicism would be like a steam-roller and would treat the University like the stones of the road.”

“I wonder would they get many converts?”

“No; but they’d prepare the way, and then I would loose bare-footed friars — and they’d have bare feet, too! — on them, to preach in the market-place. . . .”

The ordinary priest on mission, whether he be secular or regular, combines the principal weapons of the three groups named above in his own warfare on infidelity and heresy. He has occasion to swing the sword of convincing logic; he can use the steam-roller method of edifying and dignified liturgy, and he can preach the humility of penance of the bare-foot friar. Contrary to the views of the versatile Monsignor, he need not use the three methods successively, but combine them with his own.

The Jesuit becomes a bare-foot Friar, and the Friar, a Jesuit logician; and both would employ all the beauty and the charm of the Benedictine's ceremonial.

In other words, let us not say: This is the work of the Paulist, and this belongs to the Jesuit"; or "This is in keeping with the older Orders." There is only one way that leads the hungry soul to Christ, regardless of nationality, religious rule or habit, and that way is the way of Him who called us to go forth and preach the Gospel; of Him who invited the whole world to come to Him, when He said:

"Ego sum via, et veritas, et vita." ¹

¹ Joannes, xiv, 6.

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